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A Month's Meditations.

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BY

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A MONTH'S MEDITATIONS.

From MS. left by the late CARDINAL WISEMAN, *and now for the first time published.*

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A MONTH'S MEDITATIONS.

First Day.

On the Good Use of Meditation.

1. Reflect how the mind of man is compared by our Saviour Himself to a soil, upon which the seed of God's word falls, and which produces fruit in proportion to the degree of cultivation in which it is kept, and the care with which the seed is treated. For if, like the thorny ground, or like the stones, our hearts give the good seed no nourishment, it must needs perish and produce no fruit. Now the tillage and care are given by reflection and meditation upon the truths contained in the holy word of God. If the grain which is cast into the furrow were the instant afterwards plucked out again, before the earth had had time to close about it, it would be just as though it had been cast upon the surface of a rock, where it would soon be trodden under-foot, or picked out by

the birds, or parched by the sun. But if it is buried deep in the bosom of the earth it soon begins to show signs of vegetation, and springs up above the ground, and is crowned with useful fruit. By meditation is the word of God laid deeply in our breasts, and nourished by our thought till at length its effects appear in our works, and its salutary fruits ripen before heaven. For meditation consists in retaining long in the thought the truth which the ears have received, and revolving it again and again, till it penetrates deeply, and settles in the mind, as part of the stock of our knowledge. A truth merely heard is like a passenger who goes rapidly through a place where he is hardly noticed and soon forgotten. A truth meditated on is like a resident whose presence sensibly acts upon his town, and has a practical influence within it. A truth merely understood is like a sudden storm of hail, which tears up the surface of the earth a little, but soon runs off and leaves it as parched as before. A truth well pondered on is like the rain, which descends softly and slowly, and penetrates deeply, and causes things to

spring up. Nor is this to be said merely in regard to such truths as are of their nature abstract, and not likely to make an impression on the mind. It is equally true of what is in itself most impressive and moving. What does it profit us to know, as we already do and have done for years, that the Son of God became man for our sakes, and died for us upon the Cross? But let us once begin to meditate upon these great truths; let us ponder in our minds the immensity of that Being Who so abased Himself; let us turn over in our thoughts the circumstances of His birth, and of His early life; let us go minutely over the manner of His death and the quality of His sufferings, and then let us contrast them with our evil deserts and ingratitude, and we are soon brought to form a new estimate of our obligations to our God, and are stirred up to a deep shame for our offences, and a sincere sorrow and hatred for sin. Now this is meditation. The same is the case in regard to any other moving subject, such as death or hell, which will do us but little good if merely mentioned to us, or read of by us, but will quickly strike us with

a salutary fear if, meditating on them, we apply their terrible lessons to ourselves. If then it is absolutely necessary for our salvation that the truths of religion should make a strong, and practical, and durable impression upon us, how important a duty must this of meditation be, and how necessary for our salvation.

2. Reflect how it is not sufficient for the earth which receives a good seed to retain it well covered up; it must also minister a sufficient heat to enable it to develop its productive powers. And hence that meditation falls far short of its intended purpose which does not excite such a fervour of affection as will induce the soul to earnestly exert itself. What better shall I be if, after meditating upon God's attributes and mercies, I love Him no more ardently than I did before? How shall I improve by the consideration of the rigour of divine justice and its terrible severity in the punishment of transgressors, if I tremble not in consequence with a salutary fear, and detest not the sin which Almighty vengeance thus pursues? Meditation therefore, to be profitable, must not rest in the

intelligence, but must pass thence to the heart, and powerfully move it to love or hatred, to fear or desire, according to the subject pondered. It is only in this way that meditation can become the great instrument of our sanctification and the means of carrying us forward to the sublimest perfection of virtue. How was it that St. Francis was brought to so tender an affection for Jesus Christ crucified, and to so close a conformity with His spirit? Was it not by constant meditation at the foot of His Cross, or at the crib of Bethlehem, till he seemed to himself actually present in those moving scenes, and conceived those affections which actual attendance would have inspired? By repeated returns to the same meditations these emotions became so habitual, so fixed in his soul, nay so natural to him, that they pervaded all his life, and animated his most indifferent actions. And what he did, all other saints have done, in different degrees: and in proportion to the frequency and fervour of their meditations were the virtue and perfection they attained. Oh, if we were in the habit of thus culti-

vating and nursing in our hearts the virtuous emotions which meditation would excite, did we exercise ourselves in its practice with that earnestness and perseverance which it deserves, how soon might we too hope to reach, if not the high pitch of perfection granted to them, at least some acquaintance with that nobler class of virtues to which at present we hardly dare aspire. Our minds would easily unite themselves with God in peaceful prayer, and would find in the contemplation of heavenly things a delight and a comfort such as the business or diversions of this world could not afford. We should be men of eager desires, zealous lovers of God and of our neighbours, faithful dischargers of every duty, and always prepared to meet our Judge.

3. *Resolutions.*—Let us then resolve to be diligent in the performance of this holy exercise. Whoever pursues with ardour any science will make it the constant subject of his thoughts. What so much interests him will intrude upon him even at unseasonable times. He will find a pleasure in considering its principles in every possible way. If

then the science of the saints, that is the science of salvation, be truly laid by us to heart, should it not in like manner be the ever-returning subject of our meditations; should it not occupy our thoughts from time to time, even during our other occupations? Should we not love to dwell, now upon one, and then upon another of its doctrines? Yet, O God, how little are my thoughts occupied with Thy truths, Thy attributes, Thy judgments, or Thy manifold attractions! Alas! that I should be so dull and indifferent, and so careless about the use of such a powerful means of sanctification as I here possess! But in future I will be more diligent in the use of this holy exercise. Thy law shall be ever before mine eyes, and, what is more, shall ever be within my heart, the object at once of my thoughts and of my affections.

Second Day.

On the Good Employment of Time.

1. The ocean is vast and magnificent to the eye, but its individual drops are beneath estimation. The sandy desert is like interminable space, but the little grains that form it are the lowest imaginable standards of value. And so it appears to be with time. Who cares for a second? for a moment? When sixty of them have elapsed we have at most lost a minute; and what is a minute! The second minute is of no more value than the first, nor is the third better than either. And so we go on adding atom to atom, one trifling loss to another, till soon an hour is gone. Hours escape in like manner, and after them days, and with days months; and in months years, and by years life! The entire art and mystery of spending life well, by an inverse course of induction resolves itself into the good employment of minutes. Let us but value the integrant

parts as we should, and we shall value as we ought and properly employ that precious whole which they compose. To estimate properly the value of time, it is well to meditate on it as divided into its various relative situations of past, present, and future. Of the latter we need think but little, it has no existence, and so far as we are concerned may never have it. It is the present time that is ours, and in which we can do any good. Our lives at any moment subsist in a single indivisible instant, which flies away, and only that instant is our present time. Our life, therefore, is composed of one present moment and of millions of past moments, every one of which received its impression of good or evil during that one instant that it was in our possession. From this reasoning two things follow. First, that when we misuse or neglect the present moment we misuse all the time that can properly be called ours, or that is in our possession. And if the widow's two mites were highly prized, because, being her all, she applied them well, so shall we be considered unthrifty prodigals if we squander and misspend our all, how-

ever insignificant it may appear. Such then is the value of a moment. When we fling it away, it is *all* that we can fling away. But secondly, when we have misused that little moment of time, unimportant as it seems to us in itself, we send it to join those thousands or millions of instants, coined with a good or evil, but in either case an indelible stamp. The mite is gone into one of two treasuries, either into one in which all is good coin, that will be received in payment by God, and will purchase a happy eternity, or into another that contains all our false and base coins, for which an account will be strictly demanded. These two deposits of good and evil moments will be weighed against one another in righteous and impartial scales. And yet we laugh at the idea of caring about moments or minutes, though if they are ill-spent sixty of them make an ill-spent hour, and fourteen or sixteen such make an evil day; and an evil day is a heavy thing to answer for. Let us then learn to understand the value of moments, if we wish to know the true value of time.

2. Reflect now upon the many different

values which time may receive, when considered in order to its purposes. Time is a gift of God, the gift upon which all others depend. Our lives are only a measure of time, and in no way does God show judgment more signally than by abridging our share of it, or His blessing than by prolonging it. To deprive the sinner of time, and so of opportunity to repent, is to ruin and curse him utterly. To give the just man time to perfect himself and serve his Lord, is increasing and securing his crown. How foolish, how insulting too, to the generous giver, must it be to neglect those golden moments which we now possess, and which we may make available to the cancelling of the past or the ensuring of the future? But God will not let Himself be insulted with impunity. He will take care to make us feel, even in this life, what valuable pearls we have thrown away in these our wasted moments. If, as we trust, we shall begin to really love God, many a pang of useless regret will the consideration of our past and lost days cost us! When we come to realise how many days have been squandered in

what is not necessary, how many hours in what is worse than useless; when we feel that the time present is hardly sufficient for its own wants, and gives no surplus for the discharge of outstanding debts, how ill-spent will our youth appear, and how severe will be our remorse at having allowed it to pass as in a dream, squandered and wasted with unthinking prodigality! But if we defer the consideration of the value of time, how still more bitterly shall we regret this! When we shall hear that terrible angel described in the Apocalypse cry out aloud that "Time shall be no more"; when we shall feel life and all its past years, appearing as but one moment and the present no longer slipping through our hands, like the last sand of an hour-glass, but as a flash of lightning flitting before our eyes; when the work of repentance seems measureless, and the time to perform it seems wanting; then, like that wasteful man whose tankard and wine-casks had been poured out over his pavement, but who at last was condemned to pray for one drop of water to cool his tongue, shall we implore in vain for one of those moments which we had squan-

dered by months and years! But let us look at the gain of time well-spent. How long did it take the publican to strike his breast and say, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner"? Hardly a moment: yet that moment gained him forgiveness of all his sins. How long did the thief upon the Cross take to say, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom"? Not a minute: yet that minute gained him heaven. A happy eternity purchased by a well-spent minute! Good God, what an exchange!

3. *Affections and Resolutions.* — How foolish, alas! have I been to throw away so much of this precious gift, bestowed upon me by Thee, my God, for such noble and magnificent purposes! How have my past years flown away! Whither are they gone! How little good have I done in them! What little have they left me but sorrow and remorse! "My life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighs." "My thoughts are dissipated, wasting my heart." To repair every moment that I have lost, I must make every one that remains bear me double fruit. My diligence shall be redoubled, my fervour in-

creased, my application become intenser, my watchfulness more constant. I will esteem every instant of time as a jewel without price, not to be bought by earth or all its riches ; and I will take care to be able at the close of each day to give a good account of its time, its hours, its minutes, that so at the close of the day of my life I may easily make my reckoning, and find the balance in my favour. Teach me, my God, to understand the value of this Thy choice gift, and to use it accordingly.

Third Day.

On Sanctifying our Ordinary Actions.

1. Reflect how the religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of every day and every hour, of every state and rank, of every occupation, whether of body or mind. It is not merely a religion of heroic deeds, of martyrdom and chains, but also of daily and homely performances. It is not merely a religion of sublime contemplation, of visions and ecstasies, but also of recreations and social intercourse. It does not merely regulate the prayers and mortifications of the recluse, the study and ministrations of the priest, the confessions and devotions of the professedly pious; but it condescends to direct, ennoble, and sanctify the smallest action of the unlettered toiler and the little child. It is a habit as well as an act; it should invest all that we do and all that we design. It has no limits to its dominion and its influence; the cloister and the open field,

the palace and the cabin, the church and the ship, wherever man can breathe, this holy religion may exist beside him, accepting and presenting to God his thoughts, his words, and deeds, if only he will submit to its influence. Religion is not the occupation of priests alone, nor is virtue the portion of philosophers or heroes. In the dispensation of Christ there need be no distinction between acts of virtue and ordinary actions : the latter may at will be instantly transformed into the former. And what is this true philosopher's stone, which by its contact transmutes the dross of our worthless performances into so precious a gold? The Apostle has presented it to us in that excellent sentence, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever else ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). Here is the entire mystery of Christian sanctification, the whole art of becoming saints of God. What actions can be more common than those of eating and drinking? What more remote, to all appearance, from the merit or character of virtue, or more resembling the actions of lower animals, performed, as they are, by

us as by them, to satisfy a mere instinct of nature? Yet, even these may be performed for the noblest end that man could propose to himself in the most splendid actions, yea for the highest aim which angels in glory can have, that which the Eternal Son of God Himself had in all His actions when on earth. What a field of boundless merit is here laid open to us! What an inexhaustible store of good, solid, eternal good, is here put at our disposal! of virtue not subject to delusion, and in no danger of being spoilt by self-seeking or self-love, of virtue in acts and not in words, and yet at the same time of virtue easy, unencumbered by painful exactions or heavy burthens! How can we ever cease to praise and bless the mercy of our God, Who by thus giving us the power to sanctify our most insignificant actions has smoothed the steep and rugged path to His heavenly kingdom, has made His yoke most sweet and His burden light, and has placed within the reach of us, so weak and frail, that perfection which otherwise would have been beyond our reach.

2. Reflect how foolish it must be not to

avail ourselves of this easy means of sanctification, which costs so little trouble, and makes heaven so easily acquired. How then are such every-day actions as the Apostle enumerates to be performed that they may give glory to God? First, undoubtedly, they must be all so performed as to be free from sin. Imperfect indeed they will always be, but they must not be under the dominion of any sinful passion, or directed to the gratification of any evil inclination. For God could surely receive no honour from any action which contradicted His law. Secondly, our actions must be performed in union with those of Christ. Every smallest act of His was of infinite merit, and in the excess of His goodness He has made over these merits to us, allowing us to use them for our best advantage. The Church has taught us to close every prayer by an act of union with His merits, offering our prayers through Him, our only mediator. In like manner may we offer up every action that we do, however small or trifling in itself, in union with His actions. We may unite our intention

with His, we may join the particular action we perform to a corresponding one in His life, and still more we may associate it with His blessed death and passion, the source and root of all our righteousness and all our sanctification. We shall thus beg of God to look not merely or principally on us and our imperfect performances, but upon the face of His Christ, in Whom He is always well pleased. Thirdly, we must conform ourselves, in all our actions, to the will of God, not doing them because we like them, or because we find a pleasure in their performance or their fruit, but because our Lord and God has imposed them on us as a duty, which we discharge not as slaves, nor through servile fear, but as children that love their father, and out of love most reverential gladly do His bidding. These two great motives of conformity with God's will, and union with our Saviour's actions, form the two wings whereby any action, however earthly or unspiritual of its own nature, is ennobled and soars above the noblest efforts of human virtue to the very presence and throne of God. By these

they all give Him homage, honour, praise, and glory. Every morning, therefore, the moment we arise, we should form a devout intention of sanctifying with these two motives everything that we shall do, say, or think throughout the day, as well as whatever it may be God's will that we suffer. In this manner will the entire day be consecrated to God, and if we abstain from wilful sin, and do nothing to nullify, retract, or impair this holy intention we had formed, all our actions throughout the day will be of supernatural value. But a diligent and fervent Christian will not be content even with this morning oblation; but will renew the good intention frequently during the day, and seek to give to each individual action its separate excellence and special merit. He will at the beginning of each more important action offer it up distinctly to God for each of these great ends, and he will moreover, from time to time elevate his soul to Him, and in a brief but fervent ejaculation beg His blessing and approval. Oh, how easy will it be to spend a day well and holily in this manner, and how will

our sanctification be accomplished with sweetness and pleasure!

3. *Affections.*—Bless then, Lord Jesus, from henceforth and to the end of my life, all my actions, thoughts, and words. From Thy bounty have come the faculties from which they spring, from Thee have proceeded the graces which make them worthy in Thy sight. To Thee I return them all, as to their only author and end. Wherever I may be, and in whatever condition, I offer Thee from this moment myself and all that is mine. Should forgetfulness so far overcome me that I should neglect at any time to make Thee this daily oblation of myself; should sickness, whether passing or final, incapacitate me from giving Thee my first thoughts, and committing myself to Thy protection, behold I make Thee now my offering for then. I intend to do and suffer all to the last breath of my life, yea, I desire and purpose to yield even my last breath in strict conformity with Thy life and death, and in exact obedience to the adorable will of Thy Eternal Father.

Fourth Day.

On the Use we should make of Creatures.

1. Creatures were designed by God as contributors to the good of man. Each man was intended to be a support and assistance to his fellows, and all other creatures were created to be the servants and instruments of man. Sin marred this beautiful plan, threw the world into a moral chaos, and set man at variance with the rest of creation. Man revolted from God, and the inferior creation revolted from man. That which was designed to afford man recreation became now an object of sinful pleasure. Man became the slave of creatures; they were shackles to his feet, clogs to his desires, and in general a hindrance to his accomplishing his end. The great contest of man, from the time of his fall till this present day, is with creatures, which, instead of leading him towards God, as they had been intended to do, draw his

heart towards irregular or inordinate affections, and ensnare and entangle him with unprofitable desires. Yet, no matter how great the difficulty may be, man must so use creatures that they may help rather than hinder him, in the great and only business of this present life, the salvation of his soul. It behoves man, then, well to consider how he may so employ creatures that they may be like steps of a ladder, by which he may mount to God. Knowing that the sole end of his being is to love and serve, bless and praise God, and so to be saved, man must diligently study whether any created object which claims his love is calculated or not to advance him towards that goal. All other considerations must be overlooked, or be sacrificed to this. For, as St. Ignatius most aptly observes, when a workman has something to make, he is not in the least swayed in his choice of one tool rather than of another by seeing that one is pretty or elegant, while the other is clumsy of shape, but only considers which will best perform his work, and will not choose a hammer when his work needs a saw, solely

because the hammer pleases his fancy or his eye. In like manner we, having to employ creatures solely as means for attaining a certain purpose, the end for which we were created, must judge of them exclusively by their fitness for this, and reject them without mercy when, instead of assisting, they would thwart us in our endeavours. Our blessed Saviour has most clearly and uncompromisingly given us a law upon this subject, inasmuch as He said, that if a hand or a foot be a source of scandal to us we must cut it off and cast it from us; and if our eye impede our advancing towards heaven, we must pluck it out, and cast it from us. What does this mean, but that no other standard of utility is admissible in a Christian's estimate save that of profitableness for salvation, and that every sacrifice must be cheerfully made of things not only pleasing, but apparently necessary, when they stand in the way of eternal life. Oh! how much of what now forms our joy and engages our affection would have to be abandoned, did we value creatures by this rule of our Lord which is the only one that we may lawfully follow.

2. Reflect how, although the great body of creatures has become, since man's unfortunate fall, a source of danger to him rather than of good, it has yet pleased the kindness of our forgiving God to allow many of them to be still serviceable, and some few even necessary, for the accomplishment of our end. Thus power, which is so frequently but the source or the fomenter of pride, may be often employed for the subduing of vice and irreligion, and for the protection of the feeble and oppressed. Wealth, which so frequently, not to say generally, is the mother or nurse of luxury and excess, may be devoted to the holiest purposes, as to the relief of the distressed, the erection of temples to the living God, and the propagation of His faith. The same may be said of station, honour, and other worldly advantages, every one of which, in the hands of evil or unthinking men, almost always becomes a danger to their souls, but yet may well be made to accomplish the holy designs of God by giving support to all charitable and virtuous undertakings. It behoves us therefore to consider what use is to be made of such objects,

when they are at our disposal; and the answer will clearly be that we must value and use them no further, and in no other way, than as they may be applied to the attaining of our end. Without therefore setting our hearts upon these or any other perishable goods, we may gratefully receive them as gifts of a kind and merciful Dispenser, Who wishes us, by the good use we make thereof, to merit His approbation as good husbandmen and faithful servants, and receive the reward that is allotted to these. We must study in what manner they may best be turned to profit, and consecrated to His service. And in the same manner we must endeavour to act regarding those creatures which do not, like the objects already enumerated, belong to a state of life, but present themselves casually and from time to time before us and press upon our attention. Our determination must be entirely guided by the result of the inquiry, is it for my eternal good that I should employ them, and if so in what manner should I use them? And if we discover that they may thus be rendered efficient towards the great object of

our being, we will freely enjoy them, and thank God for His many kindnesses and mercies towards us. But in all cases we will detach our affections as much as possible from all sublunary things, fixing them upon God alone, our first beginning and last end. Our eyes shall be ever turned towards the port for which we sail, and if they must be occasionally employed with meaner objects, it will only be as with the shifting of our sails and adjusting our cordage so as to bear us most securely to our final object.

3. *Resolutions.* — I will study well the balances of Thy law, O my God, that I may judge of all things in justice and in truth. I will learn to look at all things created as means for advancing myself forward towards Thee. Clear the vision of my eyes, and straighten the judgments of my heart, that they may not be deceived, that they may rightly apprehend the value of things. Give me strength boldly to decline or even to throw away from me whatever may prove hurtful or dangerous to my eternal welfare, however pleasing or dear, or even necessary it may appear to me. Give me

moderation in the use of things lawful, teaching me how to employ them in Thy service. Make me consider myself as only Thy steward and administrator for whatever good I may have to dispose of, that Thy glory may be paramount in my heart to every other consideration. Then let me study how I may best promote the good of my neighbours, and thus labouring for Thee, and, for Thy sake, working for them, advance myself forward towards that haven of rest which is in Thee.

Fifth Day.

On Preparing for Death.

1. Reflect how the whole of our lives is given to us chiefly for the purpose of preparing for death. Life is a constant scoring of accounts, of responsibilities towards God. Death draws the line at their foot, beyond which no item can be entered. The next figures to be added will be the fearful summing up of good and evil before God's awful tribunal. How important for us so to keep our books that the balance may be securely in our favour! Life is a combat, a wrestling with an adverse power. Death is its final struggle upon which the entire issue depends. Whichever party is then overthrown must yield for ever the victory. How necessary then so to husband our strength, so to accustom ourselves to victory, that we may have all the odds on our side when that all-important, decisive moment arrives. In fine, life is a course of probation, and death is its

final closing trial. Whosoever is then found faithful will be saved; whosoever, on the contrary, is surprised unprepared, will be eternally lost. What else is worth striving for; what else is worth obtaining, save that which directly or indirectly contributes towards making our destiny happy and secure? But while everything depends on the moment of our death, that moment has been carefully concealed from us. No conjecture can give us even probable knowledge as to its time and place and circumstances. It may be sudden or lingering, near at hand or distant, with or without the means of preparation. Now what is the reasonable conclusion to which a prudent man would come in a state of things like this? Surely the one to which our Saviour brings us; viz., that we must watch and pray, because we "know not the day nor the hour." "Wherefore be you also ready, for at what hour you know not the Son of Man will come." A state of constant preparation, a readiness at every moment to obey the summons, however sudden, of our Lord, is the true condition of the prudent Christian. His loins must be

girt, his lamp must be in his hand at every watch of the night: such must be his constant attitude. And what does this imply? First, a purity of conscience, a freedom from sin; for it is the sinful death that is terrible. Habitually, then, the soul must be kept in order, so that at whatever time it is called away it may be fit to enter into the joy of its Lord. Secondly, an habitual detachment from the things of this world—a separation from those clogs and encumbrances which would effectually prevent a ready flight towards the bosom of the Eternal Good. Thirdly, an abundant supply of the oil of good works, a supply as unfailing as that of the widow's cruse, which, as long as days and hours—the vessels into which it is to be poured—continue to be furnished, continues no less to fill them, and then only ceases to flow when the last is full. With this let our lamps be ever trimmed, and by their light, shining before men and angels, let us be seen watching; and then the midnight cry that the bridegroom is coming will not startle or dismay us.

2. Reflect how, if this preparation should

consist generally in the habitual living in such sort that we may be fit at any instant to die, there are also certain special acts of preparation which from time to time we should perform. When men have to undertake some great performance which requires much skill or strength, they do not content themselves with general dispositions or qualifications, but they act their part beforehand and rehearse it in private, so that when they come seriously to undertake it they may not fail. The orator, who has a mighty cause to plead, upon which his reputation and fortune are staked, is not satisfied with having learnt the general precepts of eloquence, but will carefully prepare his matter and study his words, and perhaps recite them beforehand alone, that he may the better discharge his task. The champion in the ancient games was not content with his daily training, but further tested his skill with experienced combatants before the day of the contest arrived. And we, then, since we have to undergo the one decisive, all-important wrestling with death, upon the issue whereof hangs the second death or a crown of unfading glory, ought

surely to make a more special preparation for it, by such practices as may arm us for it, may strengthen us to encounter it and, as it were, accustom us to look it in the face. One of the most useful of these practices is the frequent meditation on death, on its terrors and its hopes, its sufferings and its consolations. Let us put ourselves in spirit upon our last couch, we will surround ourselves with all the circumstances and appurtenances of the death-bed—our weeping friends, our silent attendants, the solemn ministers of God—and let us endeavour to invest our minds with the thoughts and feelings which such a situation must generate, revolving the graces lost and the sins committed in the past, dwelling on the pain and weariness of the present, and considering the prospects and expectations of the future. Let us weigh vice and virtue in the balance of the approaching judgment; let us view temporal good and evil by the flickering flame of the expiring watch-lamp; let us mete our own worth by the measuring-rod in the hand of the angel of death. Such a meditation as this, frequently repeated, will teach us how to conduct our-

selves when the fatal moment arrives. And especially at periods of retreat and retirement let us renew more earnestly this our preparation and rehearsal. When the Church places ashes on our heads, and during the ensuing season of fasting and prayer reminds us of our mortality, we may make our departing hour the subject of more particular meditation. But every evening, when we lay ourselves down upon the bed which may be the scene of our last struggle, let us turn our thoughts to death, and placing ourselves, as our evening devotions exhort us, in the condition in which we should then wish to be found, let us beg of God the grace of a happy death, the greatest blessing He can possibly bestow on us here below. For prayer, after all, prayer for a happy departure hence, and a steady flight into the embraces of our God, is the best, and should be the most frequent act of preparation for that tremendous day, when heaven and earth shall be moved in our regard.

3. *Affections and Resolutions.* — Above all things, my dear Lord Jesus, let my preparation consist in a frequent contemplation

of Thee, now in mortal agony on the Mount of Olives, now expiring on a cross for love of me. Thus let me learn the art of dying well, resigned to the will of God and the pains I may have to endure, and drawing hope from Thy abandonment, comfort from Thy desolation, refreshment from Thy thirst, strength from Thy exhaustion, health from Thy wounds, and life from Thy death. Studying the lessons of the crucifix I shall learn how to die, and how to be ready for death. I shall learn how to crucify the desires of the flesh, how to mortify its appetites, how to slay its baneful inclinations. And thus united to Thy Cross in life, accustomed to conform myself to it, to make it my type and model while in health, it will be my joy to unite myself with it at the moment of death. O glorious and loving Saviour of my soul, through Thy bitter death and passion, bestow upon me this grace of ever living prepared, that when Thou shalt stand at the gate and knock I may be both ready and willing to greet Thee. Make me lead a laborious and watchful life, that thereby I may gain a peaceful and blessed death.

Sixth Day.

On the Death of the Wicked.

1. A man who has many houses, broad lands, powerful influence, many servants and retainers, and a large family connection, is now lying on his bed of death. The first physicians, lavishly paid, exhaust upon him the resources of their art, the most expensive viands and restoratives support his failing strength, his couch is soft with down, his family watch around him with noiseless solicitude; everything is done that skill or affection can suggest; yet he is uneasy and fretful, he turns from side to side, he mutters peevish words. No one has ventured to tell him that hope is past, and that his last hour is approaching, yet he suspects this, and hence his sullen, peevish anger and his evident state of fear. Why does he fear? He fears because he is a sinner! Let us approach his bedside, and there let us study him for our own improvement and warning. He has lived many

years; did he expect to live for ever? Certainly not; his folly was never pushed so far as that. Did he never think of death, and that it was, or might be, near? Yea, and in spite of himself. He saw the destroyer ever and anon lying in wait for him, he saw him often strike down others at his side. He has seen his scythe lifted over his own very head, but he has always contrived to escape him till now. This time, however, he feels himself fairly driven into a corner; he is between two walls, and all retreat is cut off. "Flight hath perished from him." He has therefore this time for once and all to meet the foe, and perish in the meeting. It is not the pain which the fatal stroke will give that drives him to such despair: he suffers as much now as he ever can on earth. There are two thoughts which principally afflict and distress him: the thought of what he leaves, and of whither he is going. He has lived in this world as though he had never heard of any other. Heaven was as devoid of charms for him as the valleys of the most distant land could be. Hell had possessed no more terrors for him than the prison or the work-

house. It never occurred to him to reflect that one day he would have to choose between heaven and hell, by a good or evil death. He was all along a plant of earth; he shot his roots deep and wide into it; he was seated upon running waters, and drank in the nourishment of its pleasant moisture; and his leaves were green, and his branches wide, and he flourished like a cedar of Libanus. But now he feels an unnatural violence pulling at the trunk, and tearing up the roots, and he knows that he must fall. Everything most dear to him must go. He that was honoured and courted must disappear for ever from the scene of life; men will cease to remember him. Of all his rich furniture not one piece shall follow him; of all his wealth not one small coin; of all his rich domains not one blade of grass; of all his titles not one syllable; of all his many honours not one vestige! In a few minutes he will be poorer than the beggar whom he spurned but recently from his carriage door, as bare of honour as a murderer hanged on the gallows, less apparent in the catalogue of living beings than the smallest insect that

creeps unseen in his garden. All his projects are at once cut short; his prospect of greater honours and dignities is closed for ever; the door to distinctions or preferments is shut mercilessly in his face; all the improvements he had planned for his property are fallen to the ground; and he must bequeath to another all that he possesses and loves. His heir in return shall have him nailed down in a velvet-covered coffin, shall shut up his noisome remains in a damp, dark vault, shall erect a tablet to his memory, and then leave him as a prey to worms. Can he see himself on the eve of such a fate, and not tremble with fear and rage?

2. Reflect how all this would cause little or no uneasiness to one who looked on death less as an end than as the beginning of a happy existence. Our sick man might heed but little leaving this world, if he knew not too well that he was going into another. This it is that grieves him so sorely. He is about to enter into a country where he has made no interest, where he has no friends, where the estimate of things is very different from that to which he has been accustomed,

and where he must appear unaccompanied by any of those circumstances and helps which have been so useful to him here below. Friends and clients, wealth and influence will be of no avail, nor can he take them along with him. Scarcely will his body have been sundered from his soul when the spirit will stand before a terrible bar, to answer for all the deeds of the flesh, its concupiscences and evil desires. In vain does he now attempt to turn his thoughts from this awful consideration. His mind, in spite of himself, is full of it, and his memory is driven back upon the recollection of his past life. A balance he knows will have to be struck between his good and evil deeds, and he runs over the account. Instantly there arises a host of dark and hideous recollections, commencing with the earliest dawn of intelligence to its present fading ray. Sin and iniquity from first to last; sins of the mind by proud and impious thoughts; sins of the imagination by impure and indecent representations; sins of the heart by covetous, ambitious, and dishonest desires; sins of the will by dangerous and fatal com-

placencies; sins of the soul by not loving God, not fearing Him, not hoping in Him, nor believing in Him; sins of the senses; of the eyes, the taste, the ears, by unlawful or excessive indulgence, sins of the body by unclean gratifications, sins of the tongue by improper discourses; sins of the hands and feet by rapine and extortion; and by running headlong into every dangerous occasion. In fine, sins of omission in every duty personal and relative, in the total neglect of religious obligations, sins of scandal and disedification, if not of seduction and depravation of others! All these, either not confessed or badly repented of, present themselves vivid, clear, and explicit in all their details to his affrighted soul! This is his indictment: he must now prepare his defence. Alas! where shall he find it? In the trifling alms which humanity or deference to public feeling has wrung from his ample purse? In his few hasty prayers one day in the week, or his careless confession once in the year? How poor will all this now appear to him! Then add to the account against him abilities misapplied, opportunities of good despised, graces re-

jected, calls and inspirations contemned! Oh! what a career of infamy does his life now appear! what a spendthrift's reckoning does he find at the end! But is it all too late? Is there no time for repentance, no room for pardon? Are God's mercies exhausted in his behalf? No, certainly, if he will turn him with his whole heart to God, and lovingly repent of his past iniquities. But, alas! whence is this repentance to come? He has never yet loved God; he can feel no more true regret for having offended Him than he could for having displeased one whom he has never seen or known. The motives of sorrow are new and strange to him; they make no lively impression on his soul, and though he is horror-struck at his crimes, and ashamed of his countless abominations, he feels no real compunction or contrition. Hence he feels little or no relief from having gone through the forms of religious reconciliation, and his anguish-tossed conscience is sunk in an abyss of rage and despair. Words of comfort and hope, no matter by whom spoken, whether by his weeping family or by the minister of God, fall dull

upon his ear, and reach not to his soul. God's justice, stern and inflexible, is the only one of God's attributes that he sees, and it stands between him and the gate of heaven like an angel waving a sword of flame. Now the sword takes the form of that place where his crimes have been most frequently committed; now the angel that brandishes the sword bears the features of one or other of the numerous victims of his iniquities; then perhaps all the victims of his sins seem to start up together and, surrounding his bed, howl his death-knell in his ear. In his heart he curses the day that gave him birth, and every hour of his past existence, and still more this present hour, which shows him so clearly the pit he has digged for his own feet, yea the yawning abyss of eternal woe, into which he knows he must soon be plunged. He starts at its brink, and instinctively draws back, like a courser at the edge of a precipice; but the outstretched hand of Divine justice seizes him in its grasp, and while those around him are listening to his last sob, hurls him down into the burning pool!

3. *Affections.* — Great God! what a fate! What an end to the life of honour and wealth and pleasure which we suppose him to have led! In that one moment are amply counterbalanced years of illicit gratifications or foolish enjoyments. In that one instant Thou art amply avenged of all the slights committed against Thee and Thy law. Oh! never may I incur this most evil death of the sinner, this terrible fate of those that forget Thee! Let the representation of it hang before my thoughts, to warn me from sin, and to keep me in that salutary fear that may save me from the awful terrors of that scene. Let not my last words be expressions of blasphemy or rage, but rather make them words of hope and confidence and love.

Seventh Day.

On the Grave.

1. Reflect how below this world on which we tread is another much more worthy of our serious contemplation. It is populous far beyond this visible earth; its inhabitants are as numerous as all the generations put together which have from the beginning occupied this world. Its aspect is not green and fresh and beautiful like this upper earth which we see, but dark and damp, dismal and cheerless. In it is no pleasant vicissitude of day and night, no welcome succession of seasons, relieving weariness and giving alternate flowers and fruit; but all is iron-bound in a stern decree of barrenness and unchangeableness. Those who inhabit it have no pleasant converse, they know no words of salutation, they have no terms of friendship; neither is there heard among them any busy hum of traffic or sounds of cheerful

toil; but a universal, undisturbed stillness reigns throughout. They have no longer senses with which to perceive, or power of motion, or change of posture. As they have once laid them down so they remain. The fire of their eyes is quenched in its hollow hearth; the voluble tongue is hard and shrivelled in its sunken cavern; the active brain is shrunk and parched in its roofless hall; the noble heart is cold and apathetic in its ruined palace. What world of terrors is this? What dismal region of life's existence? It is the grave, in which our fathers now lie, and to which we are hastening! It is that ample reservoir into which each successive stream of human generations, of every climate and country, flows: the pure and noble with the obscure and unclean; the polished and refined with the rude and barbarous; the royal stock and the ignorant savage. And where is this vast receptacle of earth's glories and earth's dishonour? Everywhere, whithersoever we turn, almost wheresoever we tread. It is in the sepulchral vault, where the dead take their first sleep, whether rotting in state beneath velvet

and gilt escutcheons, each in his solitary coffin, or festering in heaps without shroud or covering. It is in the charnel house, where the dry bones and bleached skulls of thousands are indiscriminately thrown together. It is in the very soil whereon we daily tread, composed as it is of the dust which has been gradually sifted off from those remains of ages, and turned into a rich loam, or a barren dust that the wind scattereth abroad. Ah! poor humanity! and is this thine end? Is this the term of all thy countless host? Is it thus that thy proud armies, now glittering in array, shall one day be marshalled? Is it thus that thy enthusiastic assemblies, who to-day applaud in the theatre or cheer the eloquent orator, shall in a few years be congregated? Is it thus that the brilliant assemblies of thy noble dames and lordly gallants, who so little think of those things now, shall shortly grace the court of that melancholy kingdom? Avaunt, deceitful world! Thy painted state is but a mockery; thy condition here but momentary; but that which awaiteth thee is long

and sad! How shall I love thee for thy pleasures? how shall I honour thee for thy glory? how shall I follow thee for thy reward? No, I will not esteem or admire what so soon shall disgust me and cause loathing to my soul!

2. Reflect now, not so much upon this immense, devouring receptacle of the human species, as upon the individual place that each of us will find in it. The grave is that last, small bed, on which we shall repose, the narrow house wherein our mortal frame shall dwell. There we shall be soon laid; our sinews and flesh shall fall to pieces; our bodies shall turn into a hideous mass of fetid corruption; our bones will for some years remain an ugly skeleton, and then fall to pieces, and moulder like the rest. And will that be I? the same person who now reads these lines? At every stage of this disgusting course will men be able to say that it was once a man that was proud, vain, ambitious? that he thought himself worthy of admiration or of love? that he pampered that flesh which is putrefying, and fondly nursed it? that through attachment

to it he neglected that nobler portion of his existence, which the grave could not fetter nor death subdue? Who knows but one day my skull may lie upon the hermit's table, as the glass in which he will contemplate the vanity of human things, the dial whereon he will calculate the shortness of time, the book wherein he will read the insecurity of earthly hopes, the memorial in which he shall see recorded the end of all worldly happiness! And shall I come to this? Shall the moralist or the preacher be able soon to read over my ashes a lecture upon death and its power to undeceive? Shall he be able to say: this handful of dust once thought like you that live, and had friends that loved it, and servants that waited on it, and clients that petitioned it, and flatterers that praised it, and a soul that was vain of it? And now what is it? When the rain falls upon it it is clay; when the sun shines upon it, dust! O grave! shalt thou teach others such lessons through me, and I not learn them? Shall others be wise at my expense, and I be ignorant, when so many have gone before me?

No, I will look down into thee, and from thee learn now what others may learn when I am in thee. I will bury in thee before I descend thither my vanities and follies, my ambition, and my hopes on earth. Let them lie there now without me, since otherwise they will one day accompany me thither. And now let me look at thee with a Christian's eye, as the seed-bed of immortality. Yes, thou art the furrow into which the grain of corn must be cast, that it may rot beneath the clod, only to spring up again clad in beauty and crowned with honour. Thou art the dark envelope into which this faded and creeping humanity of ours must for a short time retire, to put on a bright and glorious form worthy to move in the paradise of delights! Welcome then thy cold embrace, welcome thy long and silent repose! To thy wardenship I freely resign this earthly tenement till the archangel's trumpet shall bid me exclaim, "O grave, where is thy victory?"

3. *Affections.* — And didst not Thou, most amiable Jesus, over whom death had no dominion, yet choose to descend into

this our common dormitory, to consecrate and bless it by Thy temporary presence? Thou hast made the Christian's grave a couch of hope, a holy inviolable sanctuary, which it is sacrilege to disturb! Thou gatherest up, in the treasury of Thy promises and mercies, every atom of our dust which the winds disperse, that one day, united together by Thy hand, it may be restored to us, a body incorruptible, worthy of being in Thy court, where Thy sacred humanity shall rule supreme. Teach me often to meditate among the tombs, to converse with generations now passed, and profit by their silent lessons. Detach me from those things upon which the moth and rust can feed; and teach me now to prepare those incorruptible garments of charitable works, such as saved Dorcas from the tomb, that they may strew the grave for me in peace, and make my resting-place be in hope. By Thy own death and burial, make my grave such as was Thine, the preparation for a glorious resurrection.

Eighth Day.

On the Situation of Each Individual at the Last Day.

1. Reflect how important it is for us, in meditating on the terrors of the last day, to individualise them as much as possible, and apply them to ourselves. So long as we only consider ourselves as forming component parts of the immense multitudes there collected, it appears to us as though only a very small portion of its anxieties, fears, and other affections could belong to us. But let each of us look at himself alone, and try to unravel the feelings he is likely then to experience. Shall I then be able to shrink into the crowd and hide myself from the particular observation of the Judge among the throngs that stand before His throne? Shall I be able to engage the hills to fall upon me and the mountains to cover me by skulking beneath the shadow of those more flagrant offenders or more noted characters in the

world's annals, who may be supposed to concentrate man's attention? Alas! no. On that day, I, who am now so insignificant that few of the inhabitants of this earth know of my existence, who might be blotted out from earth without my loss being felt, shall acquire an importance, shall be of a public, universal interest such as the most brilliant or extraordinary achievements could never win me here on earth. I shall feel that, for at least one terrible moment, the eyes of all mankind are fixed upon me, that all the intense attention which that day will excite is absorbed by me alone. It will be as though all this awful circumstance of trial had been appointed for my case only; and as the criminal, when he appears at the tribunal, or still more upon the scaffold, cannot by any art withdraw himself from notice, and though conscious that he is the most despicable and detested of all that crowd, cannot conceal from himself the fact that he is the object of universal observation, so shall I, if my misfortune place me amidst the reprobate, feel that I am as completely the object of all the Judge's

severe attention, and the contempt and execration of the saints, and the hatred and curses of my wretched companions, as if for me alone this day of assize had been appointed, and on my sole account this terrible meeting had been convened. Oh, how shall I bear this complete appropriation of the world's most contemptuous feelings ; becoming like the focus of a burning glass towards which the scorching rays of God's and man's indignation converge, to parch and wither up my soul within me! But even if this universal attention were not to take place we should each of us stand so completely isolated, so devoid of sympathy, of succour, or countenance from others, as to feel the most wretched of that wretched assembly. For it has been often remarked that a man nowhere feels so solitary and completely alone, as when he walks a stranger amidst the crowds of a great city : and so, in an infinitely greater degree, will each one feel himself abandoned upon not finding one amidst those millions who will look upon him with a friendly eye, or comfort him in his distress, or offer him counsel in his per-

plexity, or address him save with a curse! While his own attention, like that of others, will be intensely fixed upon the lot of those who precede him in trial, it will yet be so fixed on himself as never for an instant to mitigate that awful sense of solitary despair which will overflow his bosom and deny access to all relief.

2. Reflect what will be the situation of each individual in regard not so much to others, as to himself and his God. There will be all the time an unceasing and melancholy communing between himself and his conscience preparatory to the revelations which will soon have to be made, and the questions that will have to be answered. If all the world else should seem to forget or neglect him till his turn came, his own conscience, at least, does not leave him alone, but recounts to him, in words of painful importunity, the misdeeds of his past life and the fitness of his present lot. As sinner after sinner stands up before the tribunal of God, their offences will appear but small when compared with his own, these latter being measured by the opportunities he had of

good, the graces he had received, and the clear sense of sin which God had given him. To himself he will seem the worst and most accursed of all. And after he shall have been fed for a time upon this black and poisonous food of sorrow and despair, his name is thundered forth, and he is summoned to make his appearance before the face of the inexorable Judge. Now indeed is his individuality on that stage frightfully displayed, and he finds that it is not as one of a countless multitude that he is come to be tried and condemned, but as one who, if none other had existed or had offended God, would have had the same to answer for, and would have been a sufficient cause for the creation of a hell. It will not be because God's law has been generally transgressed, and his orders disobeyed, that we shall feel ourselves now brought to trial, but because we singly and under our own single responsibility have thus outraged and insulted Him. The calm indignation of His majestic countenance will be displayed as though to me alone (should my lot be with the guilty, which His mercy avert!) and face to face He

will ask me why I offended Him? "What," He will seem to say, "did I to thee, that should have made thee so early declare thyself My foe? What did I leave undone for thee that could authorise thee to withhold from Me thy service and allegiance? Why didst thou cast off My yoke? Why didst thou slight My commands? Why didst thou scorn My invitations, why didst thou trample on My blood, presented to thee through the manifold channels of My sacraments? Answer Me. For it was not all mankind in general that I redeemed; it was not for these multitudes generally that I bled and died; but thee individually I loved, thee individually I cherished and blessed, for thy sins in particular I suffered death." Oh, how fearful must this personal confronting with the Judge be to each of us, this singling out of our proper transgressions from the mass of universal iniquity in which they seemed but an atom, this being summoned to answer for ourselves apart from all the excuses wherewith the example of all around us and the established maxims of a corrupt generation at present seem to furnish. We sin, each as

one of many; we shall have to answer singly and individually. How then can we for a moment hesitate to separate ourselves at once from the company of those whose fate will then be so utterly wretched, and stand apart from them once for all. Oh, let us now so fly from the consort of the wicked that we shall not fear when we are called to stand forth from the crowd and speak face to face with our Judge, Who is at the same time our Redeemer.

3. *Affections.* — Prepare me then, dear Lord, while yet there is time, for the terrors of that hour. Let me often rehearse the scene, and be ready for the part I shall then have to act. Let me frequently stand alone in Thy presence. There let me think over the sins of my past life, and consider how I could bear to have them recounted in the hearing of all mankind. Let me meditate upon the many claims Thou hast to my service, and the pain it will cause me to be charged with ingratitude and rebellion. But let me often think of Thee not seated upon Thy throne of judgment, but as placed upon Thy mercy-seat, the Cross whereon Thou didst die to

save me. Let the confidence in Thy Blessed Passion ever accompany my faith in Thy most terrible attribute of justice. For thus Thy spouse the Church teaches us to address Thee: "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge. We pray Thee, therefore, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood." If I shall have to answer Thee individually and face to face, let me be able to remind Thee, how alone and before Thee I have mourned and bewailed my transgressions, and hoped to obtain from Thee pardon and reconciliation. Let the manifestation of my sins be on that day tempered by the evidence of a sincere repentance, and if I hesitate at all to speak my shame, let it be the result, not so much of terror as of loving regret, that instead of appearing before Thee as a repentant sinner I have not come as an ever-faithful child.

Ninth Day.

On the Separation of the Good and the Bad at the Last Judgment.

1. Reflect upon that dreadful moment when the Judge, by means of His angels, shall separate mankind into two great classes, the sheep and the goats, the good and the wicked: "and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left." The separation will not be difficult to effect. The good and the bad will be easily distinguished. The seal of damnation is set upon the evil troop, while radiance and beauty beam upon the just. Besides, conscience will greatly assist in making this separation; for the good will recoil with horror from contact with the lost, while these on their side will instinctively shrink from contact with those bright and heavenly beings. In a moment the work is done, but not without painful scenes and bitter emotions. For now is completely fulfilled that separation of which Christ spoke,

as to be commenced on earth: "I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against the mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies shall be they of his own household." Here, where every other distinction has ended save that of good and wicked, no mercy will be shown. How cruel a spectacle it is when, in barbarous countries, a family, taken in war or kidnapped from its homes, is exposed for sale, so that the mother and daughter, or the husband and wife are torn asunder from one another's embrace, and sent away to different lands! What a spectacle must then be here, where on the one side, perhaps, a parent goes to everlasting happiness, and a child to everlasting wretchedness! What an additional sting of remorse, shame, and sorrow to the lost soul, to see the parent whom it revered and loved on earth; who so often mourned over its refusal to follow the right path; who gave serious warning of this accounting-day and all its terrors; who by example showed how easy and pleasant was the way to heaven; to see this parent, unwilling and unable to recognise it as a child

or to sympathise with it; nay, compelled to regard it with loathing and even to curse it! And so will it be between companions and friends who were together much on earth, and trod the same road of profession or society. But the one adhered to his God and observed His commandments, while the other transgressed the law, and gave up his heart and his flesh to all their desires. Often the latter tried in vain to seduce the former by word and example, and as often the former used his endeavours to reclaim his friend. Still they continued to be faithful and attached to one another, till death separated them. They meet again after death for the first and last time; and what a meeting must now be theirs! But let us not dwell upon individual scenes, but rather upon the two great bodies thus separated. On the one side are the many; those who through life carried it all their own way, and laughed to scorn the few who now, as then, are opposed to them. They now see those whom they scorned exalted and happy. "These seeing it shall be troubled with terrible fear . . . saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for

anguish of spirit : 'These are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold now they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.'" How wise will they now appear who preferred the happiness of this hour to the false pleasures of the longest life!

2. Reflect how this separation is the cleaning of the floor by Him Who came with His fan in His hand, separating the grain from the chaff, that the first may be gathered into His barn, and the chaff be burnt with unquenchable fire. It is the hour when the angels shall separate the cockle from the wheat, garnering the one and consuming the other in the flames. It is the evening when, the nets being drawn in, the ministers of God's judgments, sitting on the shore, store up the good fish and cast forth the other to die and rot on the sultry sands. Two things we learn from these figures employed by the word of God. First, that this separation is final, irrevocable, eternal. These two parties shall meet no more ; from henceforth there

shall be an impassable gulf between them. For a moment they have been allowed to see one another, but it is for the last time. From this instant may be said to commence the true eternity of both. To the one side is allotted eternal repose in the glorious home that has been prepared for them by the magnificent goodness of their God; to the other are awarded the unquenchable flames kindled by God's angry breath. But we learn yet another lesson, namely, that the two classes here so strikingly contrasted already exist; and that though the separation is made on the last day, the distinction begins here below. The sheep and the goats are mingled together in a common pasture. The wheat and the cockle are growing side by side in one field; the grain and the chaff are borne by the same stalk. Now as the division made at the last day will not be arbitrary, but guided by the distinction already existing, it is most important that the one should serve as an index to the other. We should judge then by what we now are where we shall then be; and by what we shall then feel how we should now

act. Are we of the spiritual flock of Christ, obedient, docile, innocent; or are we froward and lascivious and capricious members, rather tolerated than acknowledged in it? Are we fruitful grain, giving much fruit, or only husk, straw and chaff, barren and encumbering the ground? Upon our reply to these questions depends the answer to the inquiry, "Shall we be on the right hand or on the left at the last day, unless God gives us room for improvement?" And if we are conscious how fearful a thing it will be to find ourselves amongst the numbers of the lost; if we feel how bitterly we shall curse our folly on that day, should we have preferred to walk in vain pleasures with the crowd that throngs the broad way which leads to destruction; let us lose no time in becoming now that which will then enable us to escape from the lot of the wicked, and to stand among the sons of God.

3. *Affections and Resolutions.* — O God of power and majesty, and Redeemer of the world, let me often dwell upon this awful spectacle. As I see Thee at the beginning of all things separating the light from the

darkness; the thick clouds of primeval night rolling black and terrible away, and the brightness of the first dawn smiling gladly upon the abyss: so let me contemplate Thee at the end of all things, waving by Thy hand to one side the dark and ugly mass of perdition, the thundercloud of Thine indignation; and placing on the other side the bright array of just souls made perfect, brighter than the sun. And as the one presents to me the beginning of Thy bounty to man, so let the other exhibit to me the consummation of Thy judgments. Let it be to me a lesson of salutary fear, of wholesome correction. For, Blessed Saviour! I wish to be upon Thy right hand in that dreadful hour; and I am determined, with Thy help, to secure my right to it now. When men are anxious to secure a place whence to view some worldly pageant, they will rise early in the morning and stand for hours, in spite of heat and fatigue. And is it too much for me to begin now and take my stand; that so when Thou shalt come, Thou shalt find me in the right place, and I may be where I shall then be glad to be? If I have gone astray till now, bring me back

to Thy fold; if I have been hitherto unproductive, make me from henceforth fruitful; that so I may be on Thy right hand when Thou shalt come to judge the world.

Tenth Day.

The Pain of Loss in Hell.

1. Reflect how the most terrible torment of hell is the Pain of Loss, the loss of heaven and its joy eternal. The soul of man while locked up in this dungeon of the flesh can have no adequate idea of what God is, since God is known only through the medium of the senses, and under such images of imperfect goodness as this wretched world can present. But can we expect to find any knowledge or desire of God in that most wretched abode, where all hope of enjoying Him is for ever excluded, where He is seen only in His justice, and felt only in His chastisements? To comprehend how the privation of God, so known and seen, can become a torment to the soul more acute and insufferable than the burning furnace in which it is detained, we must consider what it is that prevents ourselves from feeling the

intense attractions of God's nature. It is not distance of separation ; it is not remoteness from the centre of His power ; it is due merely to weakness of perception, and our want of faculty to understand or appreciate the excellence of His perfections. The sun shines as brightly on the landscape whether a blind man or one endued with perfect sight be present. But the blind man is insensible to the charms of its splendour, while the other thoroughly feels them. While united with the body the soul is as one that is blind. But the veil of humanity, the thick gross covering of sense, the bandage of the passions are withdrawn from before the eyes of the disembodied soul, and it will gaze on God, the instant after death, not indeed with a vision of fruition, yet with keen apprehension of His beauty. God, in any case, so becomes known to it, that the privation of God would be henceforward the source of its deepest misery. His mighty power, too, grinds and crushes the souls of the lost as beneath an ever-revolving mill-stone. They feel His power in their inmost vitals gnawing and consuming them, in the marrow of their

bones racking and parching them, in their very heart's core tearing them to pieces. His justice, while they curse and blaspheme it, they acknowledge in the punishment awarded to them ; for conscience, through its gnawing worm, tells them how fitting and right it is that they should be thus, for all eternity, requited with woe. Even His goodness and holiness, as shown in the hatred and detestation of sin which their punishment displays, come more home to them now than could have been possible on earth. "If I descend into hell," says the royal Psalmist, addressing God, "Thou art present." For nowhere is God more known than He is in that place of torments, except in His own glorious kingdom. Imagine then the situation of one of these wretches, with this image of God ever before him, feeling that once it had been in his power to enjoy its contemplation in a place of eternal rest instead of on a bed of fire, in the glorious mansions of life eternal instead of in a dungeon of endless misery, amidst saints and angels instead of amidst devils and lost souls. Oh, what a racking

source of unceasing remorse! What unmitigated, inconsolable despair!

2. Reflect on the feelings to which this clear perception of God's attributes and perfection must lead. So long as the falcon is hoodwinked it remains quiet upon its perch, and feels not the bands that tie it down. But uncover its eyes, and let it see the free open air in which instinct makes it long to revel, and it will beat its wings, and raise itself up, and strive and struggle to fly upwards, and to break its chain, which now indeed it feels to be a chain, and through its own eager attempts to escape and soar aloft it galls its limbs and causes itself grievous pain. Even so with the soul. It has been created for God. All its natural powers, its inborn instincts, tend towards heaven; and it is only violence that can withhold it from flying upwards thither. It is as a flame, dark indeed and dismal, but still active and restless, ever pointing and darting upwards, and consuming itself in its efforts to rise into the air. By all this constraint and useless conflict what pain and wretchedness must be produced! Imagine the traveller who, fainting

in the desert through weariness, sees at a distance before him a lake of cool, refreshing water, surrounded by beautiful verdure, but whose strength fails him, whose knees sink under him, so that he cannot reach it! How he writhes in anguish of spirit, how much more he feels his burning thirst than he did before this object of his longing desire came within his sight. Or imagine the fevered patient who sees before him what he thinks would instantly abate the fire within him. Now he fixes his eyes upon it and would make any sacrifice to reach it, but his weakness will not allow him to rise. The soul has now lost all connection with what can delude or beguile it; it has no amusements, no friends, no ambitious pursuits, no wealth, no family concerns to occupy it. Neither has it passions to blind or deceive it, no pride, no lust, no vanity, no dissipation of heart. It is a bare spirit, it is in a world of realities, and is capable of none but true impressions. There is consequently no interposing feeling between itself created for God alone and that God Who is its end. Nothing else can satisfy it; no, not heaven itself, without God.

For if we could imagine all the collective joys of that place on the one side and God alone on the other, and union with God to be accompanied with the fiercest torments, and the soul, dissevered from the body, left at liberty to choose either God with suffering or the joys of heaven without God, a law of its nature would bear it undeviatingly towards God by a gravitation over which it could have no control. It would fly to its own sphere, the bosom of God, unrestrained by any suffering that could accompany its choice. If then the eagerness of the soul to enjoy God, if its essential, necessary, instinctive impulse bears it irresistibly towards Him, in such way that heaven itself, without God, could not satisfy it, then may we truly say that all the other torments of hell, corresponding as they do to the other enjoyments of heaven, are not equal to this one of separation from God. Age after age the soul shall pine with fruitless desires, and waste itself away in an unceasing fever of unsatisfied aspirations. Oh! dark and dismal lot! Oh! truly infinite despair.

3. *Affections.*—Now, even now, when my

soul so dimly perceives Thee, and so languidly loves Thee, it cannot bear the thought of separation from Thee, my God. Distracted by creatures, allured by follies, taken away from Thee by almost necessary occupation, it turns to Thee from time to time, to say to Thee in sincerity of heart: "Thou art my God." In Thee even now it finds relief in its pains, comfort in its afflictions, and solace in its labours. If it fears that sin may have separated it from Thee it grieves, and it will not rest till it has been reconciled with Thee. And shall it bear the very possibility of being sundered from Thee for ever and ever! and that when it shall better know Thy perfections and apprehend in some true measure Thy infinite beauties! Forbid it, my good and merciful God! never, never let this be my lot! I have been redeemed by the blood of Thy only-begotten Son, I have been sealed on my forehead with the sign of His salvation, I have been blessed by Him in every way, I have been His and Thine by a thousand titles in life—I moreover give myself to Thee for all eternity. Oh, cast me not off, spurn me not, leave me not at a distance from Thee,

from the light of Thy glorious countenance, from the sight of Thy blessed Jesus' wounds, from all that can make me happy, and to lose which constitutes eternal misery.

Eleventh Day.

On Contrition.

1. Reflect how the Church of God teaches us that the repentance enjoined as the remedy of sin is not a mere burst of passionate sorrow, but a well-regulated affection of the heart joined to certain acts, which subject its sincerity to proper tests and secure its efficacy for a change of life. All this the mercy of God has embodied in the sacrament of penance, the institution whereby sins are forgiven in His Church. The three parts of this sacramental penance are contrition, confession, and satisfaction. The first of these affords matter for our present consideration. Its name, if we consider its etymology, implies much more than ordinary sorrow, it insinuates that the soul is crushed beneath its load. And thus it expresses that deep humiliation into which the sinner is cast, as though the weight of God's judgments, added to the burthen of his

own iniquities, bowed and pressed him down, and reduced him to that dust from which he was taken, or confounded him with those ashes in which in spirit he lies to expiate his guilt. It expresses not merely the humility, but also the contempt with which we look upon ourselves when we address God to implore forgiveness. And in fact can we feel otherwise than despicable when we place ourselves in the position of culprits? So long as we are in sin, we are standing on the very verge of the infernal pit. No sooner do we open our eyes to the terrors of our situation than we must feel at once how completely the justice of God has us in its terrible grasp, unless we can obtain forgiveness. Imagine to yourself one fleeing from a powerful enemy, who has sworn to show him no mercy, till he finds himself arrived at the edge of a sheer precipice. Another step will dash him headlong to destruction, while just behind him gleams the avenging sword of his foe. Advance and retreat seem equally impossible. The abyss will surely have no mercy; possibly an enemy's heart may. He flings himself upon the narrow

ground that separates him from destruction, and pours out his supplications for pity. How humbly does he now speak! How his accents tremble with terror! How he fears to raise his head and meet the eye of his angry adversary! Will his enemy's heart relent? Will he be softened by his sobs and tears? Will he not rather spurn him with his foot, and dash him into the yawning gulf? Here indeed we have some idea of the fear and trembling which actuate the sinner who, conscious of the perilous extremities to which he is reduced, and seeing no way of escaping from the avenging hand of a just and powerful Lord, save to cast himself on His mercy, trembling and terrified throws himself at His feet and implores His forgiveness. How earnest will his supplications be! How sincere his tears! If he fail in his request he is undone, and the hell which he sees open before him is the only alternative! What a motive for regret is the cause which has placed him in so terrible a situation!

2. Reflect how this is but a base and servile species of sorrow, such as deserves not the name of contrition. But let us

suppose that the poor wretch whom we imagined to ourselves in our first consideration, venturing at last to raise his eyes towards him whom he had so much provoked, saw his countenance, not inflamed with fury, but radiant with benignity, his eyes full of tenderness, his sword flung far out of reach, his hands stretched forth to raise him from the ground and bear him out of his present peril, while he spoke words of encouragement and comfort, and offers reconciliation and love—how would the emotion of the guilty wretch be at once changed, and pass in an instant from the extremity of fear to that of love? Would not his transgressions appear to him far more grievous than before, now that he sees how kindly and loving a friend has been provoked by them to such anger and vengeance? Would he not appear to himself a base and ungrateful wretch, to have flung away the friendship and love of one so good, so unspeakably merciful? And oh! what a mixture of shame and affection, of humility and devoted love, would there be in his heart as he rose to his feet to return the embrace that

was offered him! Must not the feeling of the repentant sinner be like to these, when he begins to consider the immense goodness of God, Who though mortally offended and outraged by him, is still willing to receive him to mercy? He ponders upon the proofs of redeeming love which his Blessed Saviour has given him; he dwells upon the mysteries of His sacred infancy and of His dear Passion and death. His Saviour's calls to sinners, and His invitations to all that labour, seem now to come from as many mouths as He has open wounds in His gashed limbs and body. And all this toil and suffering he realises now was out of love for him, who had recklessly and unfeelingly gone on provoking and offending Him! Wretch that he now feels himself! What is the fear of hell compared with his anguish of remorse at seeing the manner in which he has treated so good, so kind, so loving a God! Oh, with what burning words of sorrow will he now confess his guilt? With what streams of tears will he desire to wash the reproach from his heart? Then by degrees, if he continue faithful to his meditations, he will raise his thoughts

still higher and contemplate the essential beauty and perfections of the Eternal God, before Whose face his villainies have been committed, Whose power, always exercised so benevolently, he has tried to thwart; Whose designs, ever planned in merciful wisdom, he has studied to dernge; Whose excellence and charm he has endeavoured to foully deface, by the scandal which his enormities have cast upon His law. This ocean of perfection, this essence of all good, he has vilely and unfeelingly insulted, offended, and yet has not been cut off in the midst of his crimes. How must his sorrow become an absolute detestation, an abhorrence for the evil which has so cruelly outraged so good a God. And this loving sorrow for God's own sake will be a true contrition.

3. *Affections.*—Give me, O Blessed Lord, this contrite and humble spirit which Thou never wilt despise. Surely I, whom Thou hast so loaded with mercies, whose eyes Thou hast so often opened to the consideration of Thy manifold perfections, shall not need to meditate upon the terrors of Thy

justice to work myself up into a hatred of sin. Let it be the thought of Thy infinite goodness and perfection alone that excites my sorrow. And let my daily acts of contrition no longer be empty forms of words, but fervent effusions of heartfelt feelings. For I detest, most merciful God, I detest from my soul my numberless iniquities against Thee, to whom I am so bound by a thousand debts of love. So long as I live I will not cease to cry aloud to Thee for mercy, and to implore Thy pardon. Give me the gift of penitential tears, that every evening I may bewail my transgressions; teach me to frequent Thy tribunal of reconciliation with humility and hearty sorrow, and make me habitually possessed by Thy good spirit of grief and contrition, the best sacrifice one can offer Thee.

Twelfth Day.

On Repentance.

1. Reflect how the goodness of God did not leave this world a prey to sin, but provided a remedy equal in its efficaciousness to both the extent and the greatness of the evil. Punishment alone would not have satisfied His mercy, neither would it have supplied a motive for pardon. God, offended by sinful man, was the first to desire a reconciliation. He offered a remedy for sin in repentance, that is to say, a resolute turning away from sin, with a determination never more to return to it. Our first parents, who were the first to taste the fatal poison of sin, were likewise the first to taste its antidote. In every subsequent age, the history of the Church has recorded the story of illustrious penitents, who, like David, having fallen into grievous crimes, humbled themselves before the offended majesty of God, and in sackcloth and ashes sought and obtained forgiveness.

Sometimes it is not merely one individual that thus turns him to the Lord, but an entire people. Consider the people of God terrified by the dreadful chastisements which He sent upon them in the wilderness, crying out for mercy, and at once the scourge is withdrawn and they are received once more to favour. Or consider the vast city of three days' journey, Niniveh the haughty and rich, which yesterday so full of gladness, is now sunk into a sudden and melancholy mourning. What unexpected calamity has overwhelmed her? Is the enemy at her gates? Have her children been struck down in war? Has her king died during the night; or has pestilence blighted her people? No: a poor prophet from Judea, alone and without influence, has walked through her streets, proclaiming that "yet forty days, and Niniveh shall be destroyed" because of her iniquities. And have they not derided him to scorn? Have they not asked him where are the armies that shall overthrow the sumptuous buildings and exterminate the countless population of their city? No: they have not acted so. Smitten by conscience and stung by remorse, "the

men of Niniveh believed in God, and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least. And the king rose up out of his throne, and cast away his robe from him, and was clothed in sackcloth, and sat in ashes." The same did the princes and all the people, yea the very beasts were clothed in like manner, and, their fodder being refused them, were compelled to join in the fast. "Who can tell," said these true penitents, "if God will turn and forgive . . . and we shall not perish?" Nor were they disappointed in their expectation. For God received them to mercy, in spite of His prophet's remonstrances, and forgave them. What an example have we not here at once of the efficacy and of the manner of repentance? And as such our Blessed Lord Himself proposes to us the case of the Ninivites.

2. Reflect how in the New Testament, likewise, repentance is the great remedy of sin. The mission of John the Baptist was almost exclusively to preach the baptism of penance to the remission of sins. "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at

hand," was the burthen of all his discourses, to whatever order of men addressed. And the effect of this simple announcement was such that crowds of all ranks entreated to be baptised. In the same words did Jesus open His course of preaching, thus showing that repentance is the foundation of all Christian virtue. Indeed, what would it have availed to cast the seed of His heavenly word upon a soil not cleared of the noxious weeds of sin, and as yet unbroken and untilled? Repentance uproots those thorns and brambles of sin which encumber and disfigure the soul, and softens it to receive the impressions of Divine grace. Repentance is necessary for all, for we all have sinned. If but once in our lives we have mortally offended the Divine Majesty, we may justly place ourselves for the rest of our lives in the ranks of penitents. But alas! is it only past sin that disturbs our consciences? Have we not daily failings, if not mortal, yet such as would soon accumulate to a perilous degree, if not removed by immediate repentance? And as our falls are daily, nay almost hourly, does not the duty of repentance become with us habitual, and

should it not keep pace with the frequency of our transgressions? In fact, should not our lives be entirely those of penitents? Should not our thoughts, our words, our meals, our recreations be such as may beseem those who are engaged in the unceasing labour of atonement for failings and faults almost unceasingly committed? If the life of man on earth be a life of conflicts and warfare, it is necessarily one of wounds and scars. From time to time we shall have to wash away the blood which our enemy has drawn, and repair the injuries he has inflicted. Hence has the gift of tears been always reckoned by the Church among the spiritual graces which God grants His saints, and prayers for obtaining it are inserted among her collects. It consists in a constant readiness to bewail our transgressions, and compunction of heart at the thought of the disgraceful requital we have made to our merciful Father for His innumerable kindnesses.

3. *Affections.* — And behold, O Lord, Thou hast made this spirit of penance and contrition a peculiar prerogative of Thy ministers. It is their place to weep, prostrate

between the porch and the altar, over the iniquities of the people, in which perhaps they unfortunately have also a share. And hence Thy Church, fearful lest they should ever forget this sorrowful portion of their charge, has commanded them to wear among their sacred garments one especially intended to remind them of it. "May I deserve, O Lord, to bear the maniple of weeping and sorrow," pray Thy ministers, when putting the maniple on their arm. Grant, O Lord, that Thy ministers may ever appear before us as worthy to preach the Gospel of repentance. And do Thou give us the grace to hearken to this message which they bear from Thee, in the spirit in which the citizens of Niniveh hearkened to the words of Thy prophet Jonas.

Thirteenth Day.

On Patience and Resignation.

1. Reflect how merciful it is of God to make suffering a matter of merit, seeing that suffering is in truth the punishment of sin. Without this merciful dispensation of God the greater portion of man's life would be passed in vain tribulation, and useless grief, so far at least as recompense is concerned. We should be like slaves at the oar, or prisoners at the chain, who pay off by their suffering past guilt, but acquire no titles to distinction or reward, and when their sentence is completed, return to their homes branded by permanent disgrace. But God loved us too much to allow of our remaining in such a state of forlorn misery. His sentence could not be reversed: but He modified it so far as to turn it to our most profitable account. He attached to the discharge of our punishment not merely the merit of satisfaction, but also that of glory. He numbered the patient endurance

of the ills that befall us among the highest of virtues; He gave it a rank equal to that of the most stupendous achievements for His cause. Nay, He went further still, and placed the most noble, the most perfect degree of excellence in the patient suffering of the extremest penalty involved in His sentence. For what does He do when He crowns His martyrs, but celebrate the triumphs of His mercy over the rigour of His own decree. Now we might reasonably ask, what more could He have done for us than turn into a source of merit, of blessing, and of eternal happiness, that which our perversity had compelled Him to inflict as a curse? But with far greater justice may He ask us, how we can be so blind as not to take advantage of this wonderful disposition of His goodness? For suffer we all needs must, in whatever rank or condition of life we may be. The diadem cannot protect the head of a king against a sense of weariness and pain, nor can rich robes, stiff with gold, resist the shafts of care and anxiety. Neither learning, nor splendid parts, nor honour, nor any other advantage or superiority can effectually

ward off calamity. Earth with all its philosophy has no balm for its own pains. But heaven has sent us one in this virtue of patience, which can not only heal the smart of the cruellest wound, but make it like the scar on the soldier's brow, a badge of honour and a title to reward. Oh! how sad is the lot of the impatient man, who increases his own sufferings, and gives pain to all about him, while at the same time he throws away the great advantages which his sufferings might procure him! But, on the other hand, how blessed the lot of him who, humbled under the mighty hand of God, possesses his soul in patience, and with holy Job, looking up for comfort to the very God that afflicts him, adores Him Who taketh away as much as Him Who had given, and equally blesses His name. O beautiful virtue of patience, so truly and purely Christian, unknown in any morality save that of Jesus, grow and be strengthened within me till thou become habitual. Teach me the value of tribulation, and how it "worketh patience, but patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not."

2. Reflect that the true Christian form of this virtue consists in resignation or conformity to the will of God. Let us consider the sublimity of this virtue. It supposes that the Almighty God, having in His infinite wisdom seen the necessity of our undergoing a certain affliction, calls us into His counsels, and invites the agreement of our wills with His, in what He purposes to inflict. He asks us to consider that we are sinners, and have consequently deserved severe chastisement. He sets before us the punishment that we deserve and the punishment that He is going to actually inflict ; and we, being reasonable, must perforce acknowledge that His mercy rather than His justice has dictated the actual award, and must thank Him for His leniency, and submit to His decision, not because we have no power of resistance, but because we have full confidence in His loving kindness, and are certain that He will permit nothing that is not for our good. And if our sins have not been so grievous as to call for heavy punishment, it behoves us to reflect how they who suffer come nearest to

the image and form of our suffering Redeemer. If we may not imitate Him in His virtues let us at least imitate Him in His sufferings. We may further meditate on the exact conformity of will which the purest and most innocent of all mere creatures felt, when called upon by the decree of God to surrender up her dear Son to the fury and barbarous treatment of His bitter enemies; how she suffered a sorrow so sharp and so deep as to be compared to a sword transfixing her bosom, yet uttered no murmur or complaint, but gave Him up at the call of God. We may also reflect upon the happy results of thus conquering our own wills till they accord with that of the all-wise God; how this must endear us to Him and make Him our friend, and the honour that it is to be invited to give our consent to the rulings of His providence. Surely upon these considerations, the most innocent of men would not simply feel it a duty to submit to what his Lord had sent, but would cheerfully ascend to the higher degrees of this virtue of patience, by rejoicing in suffering, and coveting a still larger portion of that

which brings him so much nearer to the type of His dear Redeemer. Such was the resignation of St. John of the Cross, who, when asked by his Saviour what reward he desired, answered: "No other, Lord, than to suffer and be contemned for Thee." The saints indeed understood the mystery of blessing and grace which is to be found in patient suffering. They longed for suffering as other men are wont to long for riches, happiness, and ease. They prayed as earnestly for them as ordinary Christians do for length of days or domestic prosperity. Jesus crucified was not merely before their eyes, as He is before ours, but was also in their hearts. They sought to unite their wills with His in all things, but in that most especially which was His peculiar distinctive, the love of suffering.

3. *Resolutions.*—And why cannot I do the same? I who have done so much to bring merited suffering upon myself, who if my due were given me ought to be immersed in tribulation, and not as I now am, scarcely touched by affliction. After all, what are the inflictions of Divine justice, to which I

am called to submit? A few petty annoyances, perchance more attributable to my own failings than to the caprice of others; an occasional inconvenience in health, often probably traceable to some deviation from temperance or prudence; some reverse of fortune which hardly reaches me through the thickly folded mantle of providential protection cast over me. And what is all this, my God, compared with what my conscience assures me I have deserved almost any day of my life, since I came to the use of reason. "I am prepared for scourges," said the royal prophet; and so, my merciful Lord, I ought to say. Only give me, I pray Thee, a share of penitential and patient spirit, equal to the punishment Thou inflictest, and so bring me gradually forward to the highest perfection of this virtue, a love of the Cross, for the sake of Him Who on it died.

Fourteenth Day.

On Meekness.

1. Reflect what a panegyric is pronounced by our Lord upon meekness in that beautiful beatitude, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." And what, we may naturally ask, is the land of which He here speaks? Doubtless, in the first place, it is the earth on which we live, and which, strange as it may seem, is truly the possession of the meek. For the true possessor of a thing is he that calmly enjoys its blessings. Now the contentious, the wrathful, and the fretful can no more be said to do this than men engaged in an angry lawsuit can be considered as possessing the estate for which they dispute. Unruly men are ever dissatisfied, and make their own cross at every step through life. A hasty word provokes them to wrath; a chance look robs them of peace; an accidental omission of

attention arouses their angry suspicions. Their heart is on their sleeve; every man's hand may lash or tear it as he listeth. But the meek follower of Christ, who in patience possesses his own soul, keeps his heart locked up as a relic within a precious shrine, which no man can touch or wound, and which none could look upon without reverence and love. The designed insult passes by unheeded, the studied neglect provokes but his smile, intentional slights only redouble his courtesy, and determined hostility only increases the charity of his prayers. How truly does such a man possess this earth. He is raised above its accidents, and can look unmoved on all its trials. But at the same time, what a tribute of kindness and love does he not receive from all that know him? Who will insult him, who neither retorts nor resents? Who will give him pain, who never shows others aught but kindness? Who will be an enemy to him who is his enemy's best friend? His feelings are held sacred by all who are in relation with him, and whoever presumes to insult or offend him becomes an object of

general blame. He is the umpire whom all would choose in their quarrels, the peacemaker whom all would invite to heal their dissensions, the comforter to whom the virtuous would fly when aggrieved for support. He has in his hand the key to every man's affections, and his mild counsel impels them to sacrifices, such as the storming of the angry or the command of the imperious would never be able to exact. When contention breaks out, his spirit descends like oil upon the troubled ocean, allaying its swell, and smoothing its fretted waters into peace. "What manner of man is this," the bystanders say, "that commandeth the winds and the waves?" For soon angry sounds are hushed, the smile succeeds the frown, the outstretched hand takes the place of the uplifted arm, and blessings on his head are outpoured from every side. Does not such a man truly possess the land? Are not all the goods of this earth that are worth having in his possession and almost in his gift? Is wealth comparable to the happiness such as meekness secures? Is the respect that rank

obtains equal to that which meekness brings down upon those that practise it?

2. Reflect how all these temporal blessings are but shadows of those more precious spiritual advantages which meekness secures; just as the land it possesses here is only a shadow of that blessed land which the meek will one day enjoy. Long before our Saviour's coming the meek were in possession of the temporal beatitude which we have hitherto considered. The Psalmist had long before said: "Cease from anger and leave rage, . . . for . . . the meek shall possess the land"; and Isaiah, even in times when violence and oppression held absolute sway, wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: "He that putteth his trust in God, he shall inherit the land." As the Gospel came, not merely to confirm the promises of the Old Covenant, or to fulfil them, but still more to spiritualise and elevate them to a sublimer sphere, it follows that the land now promised to the meek is the land of eternal life. We then will be meek, because Jesus saith to us: "Blessed are the meek"; and we desire to be one day addressed by

Him as the blessed of His Father. We will be meek because He saith to us again: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart"; and we love to be His docile scholars and disciples. We will be meek, because Jesus was truly meek: whether He dealt with the just or with sinners, with rich or with poor, His voice was never heard in clamour, and the smoking flax He did not extinguish. We will be meek because Jesus was meek with His enemies and persecutors, with those that struck Him on the cheek and those that judged Him unjustly, and was before them as a sheep before its shearer, and as a lamb not opening His mouth. And so we, being desirous to be of the number of those happy ones who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, will be like Him in all things for love of Him, and because we are the sheep of His pasture. And so, having followed Him through His tribulations and sorrows, imitators of His meekness, we shall doubtless follow Him through the gate that leads to the pastures of eternal life. Let us then hasten to enter into that rest prepared for all that are like to Him

here on earth, and stand in the company of glorious martyrs who bore their torments meekly for His sake, and of saints who complained not under the persecutions, the affronts, and the calumnies of wicked men.

3. *Affections.*—Teach me then this virtue, my Blessed Saviour, so necessary for me and so becoming in me. For how can I feel resentment against any one, who know how much of it I have deserved from Thee? How can I answer any one with harshness or severity, who feel how deserving I am of censure from all who approach me? How shall I dare to return evil for evil, knowing, as I too well do, that what men may inflict is as nothing compared to what I have merited? But still, dear Lord, my heart is flesh, and will be sometimes rebellious to the calls of Thy alluring example. Pluck thence that spirit of pride which is the great enemy of this, Thy favourite virtue, and which will not brook any affront or slight. Away with this vanity of thought, and let me always stand in the eyes of my own heart as a base sinner, unworthy of all regard, and one who should ever hold the

lash in his hand, to invite men to punish him for his innumerable transgressions. Bring me even to rejoice in humiliation and reproach, that I may more perfectly resemble Thee, my Lord and my Master.

Fifteenth Day.

On Venial Sin.

1. Reflect how light we generally make of venial sins. We are careful to avoid those offences which in important matters break through God's commandments, and which we cannot commit without feeling inward remorse. But there are a thousand smaller faults, which we indeed know to be displeasing to God, yet never scruple at committing, whether this be from a facility brought on through habit, or from a general negligence and indifference regarding sin. Thus we would not omit prayer entirely, especially when the Church enjoins it; but we do not attend sufficiently to the duty of keeping it free from distraction. We would not consent to an evil desire or thought, but we dally with such as are not free from danger, and we have no scruple in letting not merely minutes but hours fly away in idle thoughts or

unprofitable occupations. We avoid calumny and detraction, but indulge in vain and idle conversation. In short, we would not drink the fatal poison of mortal sin, but we unhesitatingly sip the harmful drugs which undermine the health of the soul, and prepare it for an easy and speedy destruction. Now, against this miserable policy the word of God has amply warned us, by inculcating to us the lesson that "they who love the danger shall perish by it," a lesson, indeed, of fearful import; and similar to that other warning, "He that despises small things shall fall by little and little." Even considered as maxims of merely human morality, the wisdom of these principles is most apparent. Nay, even in temporal and indifferent affairs it is the same. Who knows not that the merchant that neglects small accounts will soon come to discover serious losses; or that the general who allows his enemy to occupy, one after the other, unimportant positions, and to storm small redoubts, will soon see the foe in possession of his strongholds; or that the man who allows the water to filter to the foundations of his house, drop after drop, will one day

be surprised by its total ruin? How shall a man indulge in frequent acts of intemperance without one day being overtaken by ebriety; or permit his eyes to run in pursuit of improper objects without his heart in the end lusting after them? Or how shall the affections of the soul, which are its feet, be entangled in snares and fetters without being itself tripped up and falling? But, besides these motives, based upon human prudence, for avoiding venial sins as the precursors and pioneers of more grievous transgressions, there are others more strictly belonging to the morality of the Gospel. It is only by the constant assistance of God's grace that we can be preserved from sin. But every venial sin tends to diminish the empire of grace and to establish that of corrupt nature and of Satan. The balance of these two antagonistic powers is thus so deranged as to give one a fatal preponderance; and when a trial of strength is at last made between them, in a contest of serious import, the one which has increased in strength will certainly triumph over that which has lost ground. Whoever therefore truly dreads mortal sin as the most

frightful of all evils, whoever wishes to preserve his soul from its fatal stain, let him assiduously and perseveringly avoid venial transgressions—every other precaution without this will be vain.

2. Reflect how much higher ground a generous soul will find for hating and avoiding venial sin. Such a soul sees in sin not so much a crime which calls down punishment, as an offence against a God of infinite goodness, against a friend, a Father, Who is the essence of kindness and benevolence. It will detest all that can even slightly offend so good a God. It will endeavour to guide its service of God in the light of God's generosity. If God had given us benefits only small and few, we might indeed have refrained from grievous offences against Him, but might not have felt ourselves bound to fly from what could only slightly displease Him. But when He has, on His side, set no bounds to His benefits, either as to time or quantity, so neither ought we to limit our return to Him of duty and lovingness, nor admit any excuse for offending Him in the smallest degree. Or the argument may be

stated in a contrary form, and we may reason that as God, in His providential care of us, has not contented Himself with great things, to the overlooking of small ones, as He has given us, for instance, the taste as much as reason, smell as well as intelligence, so should we study to correspond in similar proportions, and, not contenting ourselves with doing those greater things which pride and fear of remorse may lead us to practise, be attentive also to those smaller obligations which sincere love alone can be the motive of discharging. But a generous soul will moreover see that in His Sacred Passion the Son of God did not content Himself with inquiring what would barely be sufficient to save man from perdition, and having learnt that one drop of His Precious Blood would suffice, content Himself with shedding it, but unsparingly poured out His Blood in streams, and that through wounds innumerable. And will a Christian, redeemed in so lavish a way, set himself to ascertain what is the cheapest possible rate at which he can obtain the benefits of this redemption, and what is the lowest standard at which he may requite it?

Can we be surprised if towards him who acts thus, God in His turn will begin to be niggard of His graces, and gradually turn away His face from him, until at length, when his folly has pushed itself too far, spurn him away from before Him, and leave him a prey to his enemies? And thus the loss of grace and the fall into mortal sin, which are the natural consequences of indulgence in venial transgressions, are not so much direct effects of this presumption, as a punishment of the Almighty for it.

3. *Resolutions and Affections.* — Let us determine to fly from every sin, however small it may appear; let us not balance in our minds *how much* it may offend God, but whether it will displease Him at all. Let us at least take the part of generous and devoted servants and friends, determined not to come to any compromise with His enemies, but to extirpate to the utmost, both in ourselves and others, whatever can tend to impede or limit the reign of His grace upon earth. Every weed that clogs the soil, even though it be not a thorn that can tear, we will root up, that so we may strive after perfec-

tion. I will love Thee, O my God, with my entire heart; I will serve Thee with undivided duty; I will measure sin by the ruler of love rather than by the line of fear; I will estimate an offence against Thee with the eye of a child rather than with that of a slave; I will fly from anything that can make me appear in Thy sight ungenerous or unloving. But, O dear Lord, my strength is small and my danger great; temptations assail me at every moment and in many ways; my treacherous heart every moment allows me to be surprised, and I have no power but through Thee. Make me therefore watchful, that I may elude the snares that are stretched around me; make me powerful in overcoming the dangers that assail me; inspire me with a love of purity of affections, that I may not only subdue any attachment to what is either sinful or dangerous, but may abhor and dread any single offence against Thy blessed law. Make me aim after perfection, that so if I reach it not, I may at least be raised above danger of any deliberate venial transgression.

Sixteenth Day.

On Uncharitable Speech.

1. There are many considerations, worthy of our serious attention, that may be useful in preserving us from falling into the sin of uncharitable speech. The first is the facility of committing it. So great is the facility, indeed, that if we be not continually on our guard, we may be surprised into the guilt of a serious breach of charity. Uncharitable speech is not one of those offences which bear about them those marked characteristics of crime which fill the mind at once with horror, and make it recoil before its own act. It is a sin into which the very good often fall without remorse. We find them censorious with respect to others, and speaking of their faults with severity. We find them listening with apparent pleasure to words that tend to lessen others in the estimation of those who

hear ; and hence we are led too easily to imagine that there can be no great harm in such conversation, and allow ourselves to be betrayed into it. No one by look or word gives us to understand that it is a grievous sin that we are committing. Perhaps even, as amusement or wit is often found in such recitals, every one that listens to us seems delighted with what we relate, and not one is found to warn us of the seriousness of our transgression. What is the consequence ? When we come to look into our consciences and to recall to mind our sins, for the purpose of confessing them and obtaining forgiveness, we either overlook these faults entirely or we cannot stir ourselves up to that remorse which we feel for even less serious offences. Once more, it is difficult, not to say impossible for us truly to measure the harm that is done by uncharitable speech. From the observation of our own minds we may have noted, how often a slight or even playful accusation or insinuation made by another has excited in us very serious suspicions, either because we are prejudiced against the individual maligned, or because we have

previously entertained suspicions, whether well grounded or not, which only wanted a slight corroboration to become a serious conviction. And so may it be with regard to others when we speak uncharitably of our neighbours. It is possible that to some what we relate as trifling or ridiculous may appear grievous, and that the character of our neighbour may be injured to an extent of which we have no idea. But there is another fearful consideration. What we have related is sure to be repeated again and again ; and at every repetition is almost as sure to be exaggerated or distorted, and thus in the end may lead to the total loss of our neighbour's character. Yet for all this, if in any way foreseen by us, must we be responsible, as the first cause of the evil done ; and the duty of making reparation falls upon us. Our neigbour's good name is a property of which we have plundered him, and we must make every effort to restore it, even at the risk of the loss of our own. Alas ! how shall we set about it ? Shall we have the courage to proclaim ourselves defamers and calumniators, a character most

odious in the eyes of all men. Or shall we content ourselves with cold praises, or protestations of esteem, which no one will believe? This would be in fact no reparation; nor probably would all our efforts to reinstate our injured neighbour in the valuable possession of which we have deprived him be fully successful. Such are the evil consequences of this common sin of detraction, into which we unfortunately too often fall.

2. Reflect how important, therefore, it is for us to study the best preservatives against this bane of society. And first in ourselves. The wise man gives us excellent counsel, when he says: "Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? let it die within thee." Without doubt we cannot live long among men without becoming aware of their faults, whether through our own observation, or through the officiousness of others. If, considering our own failings, which are greater far than theirs, and reflecting on the tenderness wherewith we desire that others should treat them, and listening to the accordant dictates of pru-

dence and charity, we bury our knowledge in our bosoms, and endeavour even ourselves to overlook or forget what we have seen or heard to our neighbour's discredit, we shall have prevented a host of evils both to ourselves and others ; we shall have acted as one, who, having to venture with a light into a magazine of combustibles, shrouds the light in such a way as would best prevent a spark from falling. Whereas one that thoughtlessly and unfeelingly repeats what he has heard is like to one who should heedlessly venture into such a place with a blazing torch, and recklessly fling it about, to the danger of enkindling a flame, which his greatest subsequent efforts might not be able to extinguish. We ought to acquire a habit of prudent reserve in speaking about others, especially about their faults ; we should never speak of them, without keeping our own evil deserts in view, and mitigating our severity by the comparison. We ought, moreover, to acquire the amiable practice of saying something kind and favourable of every one we mention. There is no one among our acquaintances in whom we shall not find much

that deserves commendation, whether in character or conduct ; and we shall find it easy, if our charity is real, to discover topics concerning them on which charity may dilate with pleasure and advantage. But charity will not content itself with thus guarding against this offence in ourselves. It will induce us to go much further, and, casting a shield over our neighbour's character, prevent others from sinning against him. The inspired sage has once more given us the simplest rule for attaining this blessed end. "The north wind," says he, "driveth away clouds, so doth a sorrowful," that is a displeased, "countenance a backbiting tongue." In truth, the listeners make the detractors. Did no one show that he took delight in the conversation of the uncharitable ; did all, on the contrary, show that they disapproved of it, the detractor would soon be silenced. Charity moreover is ingenious, and full of amiable resources. It will discover many different ways for turning aside the discourse which offends its principles. It will add an antidote to its bane by a word of commendation prudently and season-

ably urged. It will gently and sweetly correct, by mild admonition, him who is guilty, should such a course be advisable. Thus shall we hold ourselves innocent of others' sin, as of others' ruin.

3. *Resolutions.*—I know, my God, how prone my tongue is to censure and reveal the weaknesses of my neighbours, and how inclined my pride is to overlook my own. In fact, it is this vicious propensity which is at the root of my uncharitableness towards others. Do Thou, O Lord, in Whose hands are the hearts of all men, extinguish in me this wretched vice, and make me ever willing and ready to acknowledge the good qualities and virtues of others, while I confess my own imperfections. And give me, I beseech Thee, Thy grace to labour by every art in my power to screen and protect the characters of others, defending them, excusing them, honouring and commending them to the utmost of my power. And if ever I chance unfortunately to injure or lessen the good esteem in which any of my neighbours is held, let me instantly redouble my affection and charity towards him, let me

pray for him with greater earnestness, and take every opportunity of advancing his benefit and happiness, both temporal and eternal. Thus shall I out of a misfortune draw a blessing, and make the best reparation in my power.

Seventeenth Day.

On our Prevailing Defects, and on Resolutions against Them.

I. ON OUR PREVAILING DEFECTS.

Am I diligent in studying to discover what is the failing that predominates in me and leads me most easily astray? Especially if it be of such a character as to give rise to other faults, perhaps even of a more serious nature than itself? And still more if at any time I have found it betray me into grievous sin? If it be of a more subtle and occult species, such as pride or lurking ambition, am I careful to drag it to light, to unveil its deformity, and heartily to hate it? Do I seek every opportunity of repressing and subduing it? *Examine.*

What are the faults that form, week after week, the matter of my confessions? How is it that there is so little amendment, after so many purposes of amendment? Does it

arise from my making light of these faults, and considering them as only venial offences, not requiring any severe remedies; or from neglect of the means prescribed to me in particular or generally recommended for overcoming them? Do I pay sufficient attention to them in my daily examination of conscience, or note with sufficient accuracy the progress or falling off that takes place in striving against them? *Examine.*

Have I reason to believe that others can observe in me any special defects, which is a source of scandal or annoyance to them, such as uncharitableness, ill-temper, or any irregularity in my duties, general or particular? And if so, do I study to overcome them, and free myself entirely from them? *Examine.*

II. ON PARTICULAR RESOLUTIONS.

Besides the more general resolutions to love and serve God, and discharge all my duties towards others and of my state, I have laid down regulations for my own special guidance, for the overcoming of my prevalent failings, and the acquisition of such virtues as I most need. How have I kept

up to my original resolutions in these matters? If I imposed upon myself any particular devotions, either daily, or at stated intervals, how have I practised them? Have I soon got tired and left them off, or do I perform them with unabated fervour? Do I keep up to the rules I prescribed for myself as to the frequentation of the sacraments? As to meditation and its regular and attentive practice? As to hearing Mass? How have I kept to what I had proposed regarding the examination of my conscience, my spiritual reading, and any other religious duties? *Examine.*

How have I observed my good intentions respecting hours of recreation, as, *e.g.*, the devoting of them, at least in part, to some improving occupation? Or if I made any resolutions about my behaviour out of doors, for the purpose of curbing curiosity or dissipation, how far have I complied with them? *Examine.*

Have my meals been as temperate as I proposed they should? Have I practised any mortifications, or acts of self-denial that I prescribed to myself? If there be any

other matter in which I framed rules for the overcoming of any peculiar failing, have I been particularly careful about observing them? *Examine.*

Having thus looked into yourself, according as you have found yourself negligent or otherwise in these points, make use of one of the following prayers.

A PRAYER FOR THE FIRST CASE.

O God, behold how fickle and inconstant I am in every good undertaking! I begin well, and I sincerely mean to persevere; but very soon my first fervour cools, my old failings return to their mastery, my firmest purposes melt away, and I find myself fallen back after a brief space to the point whence, but shortly before, I had courageously started. Such has been my misfortune now; and if Thy goodness interpose not, if Thy grace support me not, I shall be in danger of slipping still further back, and finding all lost that I have hitherto done. Come then to my aid, stretch forth Thy right hand, sustain my sinking steps, help me forward by Thy encouraging voice, that so repairing, without delay, all loss, and renewing

my vigour with better resolution, I may go onwards towards perfection, with a steady determined course. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR THE SECOND CASE.

It has been Thy mercy, blessed Lord, and no power of mine that I have been able, however imperfectly, to keep some guard over myself, and preserve myself from utter oblivion of my promises and engagements. Without Thy most unmerited kindness, I should have acted this time, as I have so many others, and have lost all the labour and pains taken in returning to Thee, and ordering my life upon a better plan. Let me from this derive courage, and motive for increased diligence, that correcting the imperfections of the past, I may improve in future from day to day. Grant that the next time I come to look back upon my past progress, I may find a steady and regular improvement, a renewed fervour, and a confirmed determination to love and serve Thee more and more. Through Jesus, Thy adorable Son. Amen.

Eighteenth Day.

On Gratitude to God for our Redemption.

1. Reflect upon the immense debt of gratitude which we owe to God for the splendid benefit of Redemption. Let us for a moment consider what we should have been without it. We were born in sin and in iniquities did our mothers conceive us. We were an attainted race, against whom was recorded a sentence of proscription and of banishment from our heavenly home, and we had no means of securing a repeal. Without the mercy of redemption, we should have lived for ever as the nations that know not God, given up to the dominion of passion, and slaves to every evil inclination. As blind men we should have wandered in the dark, unable to determine what to believe, ignorant of our origin and our end, suspecting ourselves destined for immortality, yet perplexed

as to its nature and means of attainment; totally unable to unravel the mysterious compound of our nature, and still more unable to raise our nobler part above the thraldom of the base. We should have been without any definite idea of the attributes of God, insensible to His charms, debasing Him to the likeness of earthly things, or contemplating Him through the medium of our own corruption, making His ways like unto our ways, and His thoughts like unto ours. Never should we have contemplated Him under those endearing forms of Friend or Father. He would have been at best but an object of terror, and even if we tried to propitiate, we should have but little thought of loving Him. We should have been under the thraldom of the tyrannical powers of darkness, deceived by their arts into every folly and superstition, led by their evil suggestions into all vice and corruption, without any cure for remorse or remedy for the evil of sin. Our lives would have been without comfort, our afflictions without consolation, our last end without hope. We should have died like the beasts of the field. But a

Redeemer was given to us, and by His redemption we have been reinstated in whatever we had lost; we have become once more children of God and heirs of His eternal kingdom. We walk in a noon-daylight, cheerful and happy, for we know whence we come, and whither our steps will lead us. We are free with that freedom which Christ hath given us, the freedom from the bondage of Satan and sin, of the passions and of hell. We have a rich store of grace, and many instruments for its application to our souls. We have faith to show us our path, and hope and confidence to bear us forward upon it. We may walk with our heads erect towards heaven, as though looking towards our home; we may address God, Who dwells there, as our Father, and as Father we may love Him. The darkest hour is cheered for us by assurance of His affectionate care; and death, stripped of its terrors, is but a gate through which we reach Him! What a collection of benefits have we here, for which to bless and praise our God, and express towards Him sentiments of deep and earnest gratitude! What thanks would the slave or

prisoner think too great towards one who should unexpectedly enter his cell, and not only strike off his fetters and lead him forth, but give him wealth and every means of happiness for the remainder of his days? And shall not our gratitude be warmer and more lasting than his, in the proportion of the superiority of things spiritual and eternal over the earthly and transitory?

2. Reflect how this redemption was accomplished, and on the additional motives of gratitude to be thence derived. For had God been pleased to redeem us by a word or a wish, we should indeed have equally come into possession of all the blessings and advantages enumerated in our first consideration, and they would have formed a sufficient ground for boundless gratitude. But a stern decree of His justice interposed severer terms, and with these He complied. No less price would He accept for our redemption than the Blood of His own Eternal, Consubstantial Son, and this price beyond all value was paid. He enacted that our redemption should be in the form of a ransom, and the second Person of the

ever-blessed Trinity undertook to pay it. And oh! what did it cost Him! Nothing less than a descent from heaven to earth, from the throne of almighty rule into the womb of woman, from the majesty of supreme glory to the manger in a stable, from the adoring homage of blessed spirits to the mean attendance of the ox and the ass! It cost Him cold, destitution, and all the ordinary grievances of childhood; and flight from his own country before the bloody knife of a persecuting tyrant. It cost Him thirty years of penury, obscurity, and humbling tutelage. It cost Him three more of fatigue and sweat, of privation and obloquy, of opposition and obdurate resistance, of ingratitude and perfidy. It cost him a death of ignominy and pain, an agony of blood, blows and buffets, a cruel scourging, a crown of thorns, loss of reputation and character, and a cross between two thieves. In fine, it cost Him the last drop of His blood, wrung out of His heart's core, and the last breath of His body, yea His very life! Could it have cost more? Could a higher rate have been fixed at which to ransom thee? There

was here no haggling, no bartering to withhold or abate somewhat of the enormous sum, no offering of it by instalments ; but the entire demand was paid in full, without demur, without delay ! Where should our gratitude end for such a benefit ? At what sacrifice should it stop ? What form of expression should it deem extravagant ? Shall time bound it, or place ? Rather may we not ask whether eternity itself shall give leisure enough to discharge our debt ? "Give glory to the Lord, for He is good ; for His mercy endureth for ever. Let them say so that have been redeemed by the Lord, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Yes, for ever doth this mercy endure. Only in heaven are the full effects and boundless mercies of redemption understood, and only there will the gratitude due for it be adequately measured. Never will those happy souls think that they have praised too much the blessing which has given them an eternity of bliss. So long as they behold the humanity of Jesus seated at the right hand of His Father, and still marked with

the scars that saved us, so long will they have "His memorial from generation to generation" of the pleasing debt they have to discharge, and so long will they give glory and honour and thanksgiving to the Lamb that was slain.

3. *Affections.* — Let us then, O Lord, begin even now this happy office. Let us sing forth our canticle even from our vale of tears, in grateful remembrance of what Thou hast done for us. When Thy people, standing on the further shore of the Red Sea, saw that their deliverance was accomplished, while their enemies were overthrown in the merciless billows, they with one accord broke forth into a hymn of gratitude, and Mary and the women struck their timbrels in harmonious accompaniment. "Let us sing to the Lord," they exclaimed, "for He is gloriously magnified, the horse and the rider He hath thrown into the sea. Thou stretchedst forth Thy hand, and the earth swallowed them. In Thy mercy Thou hast been a leader to the people whom Thou hast redeemed; and in Thy strength Thou hast carried them to Thy holy habitation." Yes, we were a prey to

infernal enemies till Thou camest to snatch us from their hands; Thou torest us away and borest us triumphant to Thy holy place, Thy sanctuary on earth and Thy temple in heaven. Gloriously, magnificently indeed hast Thou been exalted, and therefore will we sing to Thee songs of praise. But let not this, Blessed Saviour, be all. He who is purchased, redeemed, is no longer his own; he belongs to Him Who paid the price. And I am glad to be such with Thee, I rejoice in the title of Thy freedman, one whose bondage of slavery hath been changed into a bondage of love. As such I acknowledge myself Thine; Thine in heart and soul, in understanding and will, in energy and earnest efforts. With Thy Church let me often say: "What would it avail to have been born had we not been redeemed?" The birth which Thou gavest me on the cross is more valuable than what Thou bestowedst on me in my mother's womb; oh make my gratitude proportioned to the benefit.

Nineteenth Day.

On Gratitude to God for His Church and His Sacraments.

1. Reflect on the goodness of God towards us, and the corresponding debt of gratitude we owe to Him that are involved in the benefits He has bestowed upon us by the foundation of a visible Church on earth. His only-begotten Son Jesus lived in His humanity here below, to instruct men in faith and righteousness, and happy were those that heard His voice, and had the advantage of being His disciples. But how miserable would have been our lot, if for us, coming as we do so many centuries after Him, the very echo of His words had long since died away, and we had been left to conjecture, or to unauthentic traditions, or uncertain records as to what we were to believe and practise. But our gracious God would not allow us, however late our generation might be, to be

left in such a state of perplexity and darkness. He therefore established His glorious Church, His dwelling-place upon earth, wherein He engaged to teach all days, even to the consummation of the world. He therefore secures to us through her agency the permanence of those truths which He orally delivered to the twelve. We have, in consequence, a perfect assurance that whatever she propounds, is proposed in His name and with His sanction. We are secured against all possibility of error, against all doubt and anxiety, against all wavering and unsteadiness. We are based upon the groundwork, we lean upon the pillar of truth. Is not this an immense benefit bestowed upon mankind by God? Is it not a subject of sincere gratitude to Him? But the Church is, moreover, given us as a means of moral union with its Head, the Lord Jesus. All its members become His members, and are thus associated with the Church triumphant in heaven, the Church militant on earth, and the Church suffering in purgatory. And thus we are not left to our own resources, to our feeble, unaided efforts, but we are made part of a host

that ever assails heaven by its importunity, and has patrons and friends in heaven itself ready to open its gates, that we too may be admitted therein. What a blessing to belong to this happy society! If in the Old Law it was considered such a privilege by the Jewish people to have among them the Tabernacle, with its weak and needy elements, and its shadowy dispensation, what shall we say of that true tabernacle of God with men, wherein is His oracle of truth, His mercy-seat of complete propitiation, His sacrifice of real efficacy, His show-bread of substantial nourishment, His lavers of perfect purification, His ark of a loving covenant, His ministers of a heavenly dispensation, His promises of eternal blessings? "He hath not done in like manner to every nation," the Jew sang in raptures of gratitude, "and His judgments He hath now made manifest to them." What then ought not to be our gratitude for mercies and loving kindnesses so much sublimer, so much holier, so much more amiable and gracious than those conceded to the Chosen People.

2. Reflect how among the innumerable

good things which have come to us through the heavenly riches communicated to us in the Church of the Lamb, none is more precious than the open fountain of His saving Blood continually flowing to our souls by means of His sacraments. In fact, it is through these merciful and bountiful dispensations of grace that the Church educates, nourishes, preserves, sanctifies, heals, and strengthens us; that she is able to perform towards us the office and charities of a mother, and treat us as the King's children confided to her by a royal and most loving Father. Scarcely are we born when she receives us into her arms, and not only washes away the stain of our original transgression, but gives us an invigorating unction to strengthen us for wrestling with the physical and moral evils of our new existence. She gives to us to taste the salt of wisdom, the savour of life, and puts into our hands the burning lamp typical of the divine law which is to be as a light to our feet in our pilgrimage now commencing. From that moment she never loses sight of us. When the greater struggle with the powers of darkness is about to begin she

anoints us as her athletes, and arms us with endurance and sevenfold grace for our perilous conflict. Then the unequal combat opens, and soon our blood begins to flow, and wounds and gashes to appear, and faintness and exhaustion to overcome us. Who shall bind up our wounds, and heal them, and give us new vigour and strength? The Church of God, which, like the good Samaritan, is ever at our side, prepares the bath wherein we are washed from all uncleanness, and from the painful marks of our defeat, in that sacrament of penance wherein the blood of Jesus purifies and cures our souls, giving us reconciliation with God, and grace and strength for future endeavours. Then she leads us by the hand, clothed in our nuptial garment, to the feast spread for the children of the house, as though we never had been prodigals, and gives us, as often as we desire it, the daintiest and sweetest of banquets, that heavenly bread which confers immortal life, the body and blood of the Incarnate Jesus. Oh, surely if God had given us nothing else, there would be in this one demonstration of His love cause enough for an eternity of gratitude!

Then when it is time for us to choose some state of life, His beneficent institutions come to our aid, bestowing blessing upon those who desire in the conjugal state to bring up children of Abraham, and pouring unction and consecration on those whom He calls apart to a higher and holier vocation, as ministers of His Church and dispensers of His sacraments. At last will come the final struggle, the decisive wrestling with the encumbrances and temptations of earth, the painful separation from the body, the all-important crisis of death. How shall man unaided, enfeebled as he is in mind and body, with his soul almost crushed beneath the ruins of her crumbling tenement, maintain the unequal contest? How shall he look upon the past without dismay, on the present without terror, on the future without despair? The Church of God anointing his limbs and organs of sense purges away the dross of past unworthiness which still clings to him, cheers the drooping heart, and opens visions of a happy futurity. From the cradle to the grave she is the minister of God's splendid benefits; she closes our eyes, as she had opened them,

to the pilgrimage and warfare of this vale of tears.

3. *Affections.* — How ample, Oh my God, hath been Thy care of me, how thoughtful of my misery, of my frailty, of my many wants. How should I have wandered in the dark without the guidance of Thy Church, in which, as in a rich pasture, Thou hast placed me to receive the food of life, Thy law, and Thy doctrines. How many have been deprived of this blessing! How many in my own country are in this state of want, and how have I deserved to be different from them in the designs of Thy mercy. "From my mother's womb Thou art my God;" from the moment I came into the world till I shall depart thence, Thou hast provided for me in all things, hast foreseen all my wants and necessities, hast prepared for me all that can be requisite for my spiritual welfare, hast hedged me round with protection, and filled me with every good thing. Blessed by thy name, my dear Redeemer, for the sevenfold spring of life Thou hast made to gush out in this Thy earthly paradise, Thy holy Church.

Twentieth Day.

On Love of God's Church.

1. Reflect how from early ages all the servants of God have called the Church by the endearing title of their Mother, until this name has become as it were its proper name. Our holy Mother the Church is a form of expression familiar to our lips, and used by the pastors of the Church themselves in their formularies and decrees. It is evident that the use of such an epithet involves corresponding feelings of filial regard on our side. "If I am your Father," asks God, "where is my honour?" "If I am your mother," the Church may ask, "where is your love?" The very name of mother supposes a respect tempered with love, nay, rather love of the tenderest character. The obedience therefore which we show to the Church must not be the result of fear or constraint. It must be the docility of childlike affection,

the willingness of devoted children to gratify a parent's wishes. The smallest request, the slightest intimation of a desire, should be attended to without murmur, and with willing and cheerful heart. Such are the consequences which inevitably follow from this connection between us and our Mother the Church. And let us see what right she has to this title, and what claim to its prerogatives. The first title which our earthly mothers have to our special affection is grounded upon this, that they gave us birth. And the first title which our Mother the Church has to our love is that she gave us spiritual birth, whereby, regenerated through the laver of baptism, we became children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Without this second birth what would our first have availed us? But not content with having given us this spiritual birth, she nursed and brought us up in her bosom, she instructed our infant minds in holiness, she taught our lisping tongues to speak of God. She guarded us from many dangers in our early years, maintaining us within her house, the house of our

good Father. And if we have fallen away from duty through faintness of heart, or been sorely wounded in our spiritual contests, she has taken us into her care, and administered the fitting remedies, so that we have been restored to health and vigour. She prepared for us each day our daily food by the instructions she set before us, but more particularly in that bread of the strong which "affords delicacies to kings." In all this has she not shown herself a mother to us, discharging for us in the spiritual life those functions which our earthly mothers discharge for us in the temporal and corporal? What wonder, then, that this our Mother should be represented to us under the same emblems as our Mother in heaven, and that the Fathers of the Church should have considered the Church as well as Our Lady as typified by that woman whom John saw, bright as the sun, crowned with twelve stars, and standing upon the moon. Should we not then feel a tender love for this kind Mother whom Our God has given us to bring us to the knowledge and love of Himself?

2. Reflect what should be the feelings and conduct resulting from this close spiritual connection between us and the Church of God. And, first, how complete and sincere should be our docility to her teachings, and our obedience to her commands. Even may we say on this point what our Divine Saviour declared: "Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." If we wish truly to partake of the blessing of belonging to the kingdom of God, we must humble the pride of reason to the standard of the child when listening to the instructions which this best of parents provides for us. What character should we give to that child, or what should we predict of its future, which should listen with a supercilious air to the words of its parent, carping at everything that was said. And is not our conduct more blameworthy still if we demean ourselves thus when receiving instruction from our spiritual mother the Church? But something more than mere docility is required. The love and attachment which a worthy son has for his mother give him a deep admiration for her and an interest

in all that concerns her. What has a mother of either joy or sorrow which is not shared by dutiful children? Can she weep and they smile? Can she exult and they mourn? Can her sensitive feelings be moved and they remain insensible and cold? If then the Church of God groan under persecution, shall we not sorrow with her? If she lament the falling away of so many from faith or fervour, shall not our small voices be lifted up to weep in unison? If she triumph by conversions from heresy, or if she rejoice because she has found one of her lost sheep and received again a prodigal into her bosom, shall we not always join her in her well-earned satisfaction? Shall we not desire to extend her benign influence and make her maternal care appreciated by all men? Shall we not have a filial interest in her honour and splendour which will make us consider her cause our own? Let us ever remember that the Church is the spouse of the Lamb, and that we cannot devoutly love the one without loving the other, and that by honouring and serving her we honour and serve Him.

3. *Affections.*—If Thou, Blessed Saviour, hast said to us that whosoever heareth, that is, reverenceth and obeyeth Thy Church, heareth Thee also, let me never despise her admonitions, but ever take them lovingly to my heart. One of thy Doctors has well said: "He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his Mother." As a child then I will hearken with a willing ear to her admonitions and instructions, as becomes one who wishes to be a child of Our Father, Who is in heaven. Break down in me all frowardness of disposition and all pride of reason, that I may be ever diligent in practising all that she enjoins. Blessed Lord, from Whose side she issued, as did Eve from Adam's, when the sleep of death overpowered Thee upon Calvary, she is the body whereof Thou art the head; let me then adhere closely to her in faith and charity, for the love of Thee and in obedience to Thy commands.

Twenty-first Day.

On Prayer.

1. Reflect how prayer is the practical exercise of almost every virtue that relates to God. By it we render Him homage, service, and honour. By it we acknowledge His infinite majesty, and our own inferiority. In prayer we appear before Him as suppliants, we sue for pardon, mercy, and grace; we humble ourselves in His sight, and we pay Him the tribute of our gratitude. It is chiefly in prayer that we practise our faith, our hope, and our love. It is in prayer that we give Him praise, thanksgiving, and glory; it is by prayer that we obtain from Him the removal of all our evils, and the grant of every good. It is, in fine, well called the key of heaven, that unlocks to us, even while on earth, heaven's mercies and graces, and opens wide to us heaven's doors when our pilgrimage on earth is over.

How much then it behoves us to practise it well! How important it must be to understand its need and to be led by this knowledge to its constant practice. The first and strongest motive that can possibly impel us to the performance of any duty is a sense of its absolute necessity for our good. Now of all our obligations to God, there is none of which this necessity can be more strongly asserted than the obligation of prayer. Even had he never fallen, man would still have been bound by a natural impulse to lift up his heart to God. He could not have looked over the surface of an earth then so blessed without being led by its beauty to the praise and love of Him that made it. But, after his fall, when cast in abject misery upon a soil fertile only in briars and thorns, unused to toil yet now compelled to labour, with all the recollections of an Eden just lost, making yet more bitter the sad realities of his actual condition, how necessarily would prayer result from his sense and conviction of his utter helplessness, and of the hopelessness of aid from any save from God! And have not we an equal need of prayer? We are

needy dependants upon the bounty of our Creator; we can possess nothing but what it pleases Him to give us; good and evil are in His hands; our entire destiny is but the dispensation of His will. Shall we not then have recourse to Him, and earnestly solicit Him to grant us what we need?

2. Reflect how prayer is still more a necessary duty in the order of revelation. And first, because it has been made a matter of prescribed obligation in the New Law. It is constantly commanded us; nay, it is enjoined as an unceasing duty which we must never interrupt. "Pray always," says our Divine Saviour; "Pray without ceasing," repeats His Apostle. We shall not therefore comply with the commands of God if we neglect so essential a duty. But the religion of Christ impresses us with the necessity of prayer, principally by manifesting to us our wants, and prescribing prayer as their sole and effectual remedy. It shows us ourselves fallen and degraded, weakened and defiled, unable of ourselves to conceive a good thought, to form a salutary desire, still less to return to the state we

have lost. It opens the inward eye and teaches us to scrutinise our peculiar wants and distresses. It gives us the experience of our past failures in our attempts at good; unveils to us the spectacle of our past deformity: unrolls to us the catalogue of our earlier transgressions, and convinces us of our unsteadiness, feebleness, and incapacity. It exhibits to us the snares and pitfalls that beset our path, the temptations that are prepared to allure us from our course, the dangers which crouch, like the lion, by the wayside. It shows us hell yawning beneath our feet, and heaven uncertain and at a distance from us. It expatiates on the judgments of God terrible and inevitable, and confounds all hope in personal efforts or personal righteousness. Then it conducts us before a throne of propitiation, a seat of mercy and compassion—a cross of ignominy on which a Saviour hangs to purchase redemption from every evil and strength for every good—and tells us that prayer, earnest, persevering prayer, is the instrument whereby the mercies He has purchased can be alone obtained. "Ask, and

you shall receive," is the brief recipe it gives as our universal remedy. "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name He will give to you," such is the simple rule which this great Mediator Himself has given us for the reparation of our manifold misfortunes. And who will not eagerly seize upon the opportunity and make use of it? Who that is conscious of what he is without God, and, at the same time, knows that by prayer he can obtain the assistance and favour of God, will not thank God a thousand times for having provided so easy and appropriate a resource, and use it as one weary of illness would accept a specific for his disorder, as one needy and hungry would seize upon what would satisfy his wants. Let the impelling motive of our prayer be a deep sense of our manifold necessities. Let its expressions be the utterance of one who asks for forgiveness because he feels he has grievously offended and has need of pardon, of one who knows that he stands in need of every virtue, and of himself cannot acquire a single virtue, of one who knows himself to be proof against

neither the allurements nor the trials of this life, who has lost all confidence in himself, and is thoroughly persuaded that all his sufficiency is from God alone.

3. *Affections.* — Inspire my wayward heart, O God, with these salutary sentiments! Then my prayers will not proceed from habit, or routine, or human respect. I shall pray because a deep sense of the need in which I stand of every good, which none but Thou canst give, obliges me to lay hold of every opportunity of entreating Thee to help me. I shall run to prayer as a culprit to implore forgiveness, as an afflicted man to apply for comfort, as one that is destitute to apply for help. Make me every day still more sensible of my innumerable wants, and more eager to have them satisfied. Then will my attitude in prayer be like the publican's, and my form of words the simple cry of a distressed and humble heart for mercy. Then shall I pray in secret, when no eye but Thine can see me, where I can whisper, unheard by others, my afflictions and my trials into Thy fatherly ear, assured that they will find sym-

pathy with Thee. Then will not my prayers be confined to appointed seasons or set forms of words, but will be as constant as my necessities, and as varied as my wants.

Twenty-second Day.

On Humility.

1. By humility we are not to understand downcast looks, or poor attire, or a shunning of men's observation, or humble speech, or frequent self-accusation. All these may be convenient cloaks to hypocrisy, and conceal a load of inward turpitude and guilt. There have been men who wore royal robes, and seated themselves before thousands in splendour and glory, yet in their inward hearts nourished and cultivated this most heavenly virtue. In what then does humility consist? In a deep and most inward conviction of our own worthlessness, as creatures of lowly extraction, and as further degraded by sin—a conviction which will manifest itself in our words and actions. No feeling can be a virtue which is not based upon truth, and the knowledge of ourselves will bring us to that sense of our nothingness which forms

the true foundation of humility. Let us earnestly reflect upon the solemn question, "What are we?" applying it each one to himself. I am but a frail composition of the slime of this earth. From that same loam did God form Adam, our first parent, from which the potter takes a handful and shapes it into a vessel according as he willeth. The potter has not the power which our divine Fashioner had, of inspiring into his work the breath of life; but the original matter of both works is the same. I preserve all the infirmities of this brittle material; a rude stroke will break to pieces this earthly dwelling of the spirit, and make it spill its precious deposit; a much slighter one will flaw and damage it, causing pain and illness. We are subject to innumerable inconveniences in the toilsome task of keeping together this frail compound: and though we should preserve it from ever-menacing destruction for a few short years, it returns at length to the slime from which it came. It ferments, decays, and rots in the ground, like the carcase of an irrational brute, like the trunk of an insensible tree, as unconscious

as the clods that envelop it, and to which it is soon assimilated! And the nobler portion of ourselves, what is it? True, it is a pure spirit, unalloyed by the dross to which it is bound; but still, from union with the body, how lowered it has become! How dragged down to earth and earth's basest desires; how enslaved to vain and disgraceful feelings! How often is it made the seat of fear, of envy, of dark hatred, of gnawing cares, of base suspicions, of foul treachery! How often is its peace bartered for a bauble, its convictions for a moment's pleasure, its happiness for a whim! If this be our composition, if such be our frailty, can we possibly stand in the sight of God with pride and arrogance of heart? Can we, conscious that He Who knows us as we are is looking upon us, entertain a thought of pride or presumption, or take complacency in ourselves as in something good or excellent? Shall we not, on the contrary, shrink into a corner and hide our faces? Shall we not feel that we are but dust and ashes?

2. Reflect how infinitely lower still we have been sunk by sin, and what serious motives

we have in this thought for humility. Had Adam before his fall entertained a high opinion of himself, he might have appeared to have some reason for it. He was indeed a noble creature; endowed with splendid faculties and high prerogatives, immortal in body, gifted with sublime knowledge, little less than the angels. But after his fall, what matter can there be for boast? A tree stripped by the lightning of all its fruit and leaves, a beautiful garden laid waste by the hurricane, would be surely an object rather of compassion than of glory to its owner; nor would he venture to show it, save as a wreck of what it once had been. And what are we but a ruin of what we were, an empty casket from which all the jewels have been removed! And shall we be proud? Men who are of low origin are not ashamed of appearing as such. They go boldly before the face of the world in such dress and occupation as tells their rank to every beholder. But the nobleman who has lost his rank by extravagance or crime, and is now reduced to extreme penury, is ashamed to show his face. He hides his head in some

obscure corner, and shrinks from encountering the gaze of men. And shall not we feel similarly before God, Who knew us once as noble and great, clothed with dignity, and possessed of innocence and grace? But what is the general degradation of the human race compared with that which our own proper sins have produced! Can we, who know the depths of ingratitude, of sinfulness, of irresolution, of inconstancy, and of malice that are concealed in our hearts, be otherwise than humble? Can we be anything but lowly who know the history of our lives, and the formidable array of crimes and delinquencies which form its principal events? Can we be aught but dejected, who have all the consciousness of our manifold corruption, our evil inclinations and desires, our coldness and inability to do any good? Oh! there is surely in all this matter enough for humility before God, and for ever appearing in His presence with lowliness of heart! And will not humility, based upon such a consideration as this, be truly a conviction and not a mere outward expression? Will it not thoroughly pervade

every power of our souls? Shall we not pray and speak and act under its influence? Will not our imagination be humble, and not build up to itself ambitious aims or prospects? Will not our reason be humble, and cast down all proud thoughts that rise against the teaching of faith? Will not our will be humble, desiring nothing great or distinguished, as unbecoming so unworthy and base a creature? In fine, will not all the powers of our mind, and all the affections of our hearts receive a colour and character from this virtue? Such indeed would be a true, because an inward humility.

3. *Affections.*—Most blessed virtue, let me ever aspire after thee, and seek to acquire thee, by a deep knowledge of myself and a sense of my own unworthiness. Thou art the favourite virtue of Jesus, that which He particularly desired and exhorted us to learn from Him. "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." Such indeed Thou wert, my beloved Saviour; and if Thou couldst be humble, Who wast so pure, so holy, and so perfect, how humble ought not I to be, who have been so sinful and corrupt?

Yet, strange as it may appear, I find it difficult to acquire this heavenly virtue, in spite of the clear evidence I have of its being in truth rather a natural and necessary feeling than the result of reflection. It ought to be matter of difficulty and perplexity to me to find a single motive of pride; and yet my evil nature leads me constantly into it. Let Thy grace, conjointly with Thy example, overcome all my difficulties and make me humble, not in words, but in inward feeling, in mind, in heart, and in soul. In this manner wilt Thou give me that grace and blessing which Thou refusest to the proud?

Twenty-third Day.

On Charity.

1. The motives for charity are so great and so many, that it is impossible to even so much as glance at them all. Indeed, it is humiliating to us to think it necessary to dwell upon them. In matters of feeling we do not require arguments to influence us, but are carried forward to duty by the impulses of our hearts. Who dwells upon the reasons he has for loving his parents? Who thinks of enumerating the many ties that bind him with them, and deducing from them motives of affection? Nature indignantly rejects such a paltry course, and rushes on to duty by the shorter way of sentiment. And so, if a heart that has any sense of true love were to surprise itself in the inquiry why it should love God, it would surely be ashamed and grieved. What shall we love at all, if we love not God? If it be as natural for love

to seize for its object whatever is amiable and worthy of love, as it is for the eye to use and enjoy the light, how can the love perceive an object of infinite perfection without tending towards it with all its energies, and finding in it all its delight? The moment, therefore, that God appears before it, radiant with every beauty and perfection, will not the soul of man expand its wings, and strive to reach Him and rest in Him? Will not an instinctive force lift him up from the earth, and bear him through the regions of space to that centre towards which all love necessarily tends. As the heavenly bodies which form our system, if freed from the chain which keeps them in their orbits, would rush with ever-increasing velocity from every side towards the sun, and bury themselves in its flaming mass, so would every being endowed with the power of rational love, if released from the tie which attaches it to its own sphere of existence, yield to the force of an essential attraction, and hasten to lose itself in the immensity of God. It is not necessary to be gifted with a sublime power of abstract contemplation in order to arrive at such an

apprehension of God's infinite loveliness as to conceive affection for Him for His own sake. Whenever we cast our eyes on the works of God, we see traces of His admirable perfections, sufficient to engage our love. What is creation but a portrait, or rather a reflection of His excellencies, faint indeed, but abundantly sufficient to give us some idea of Himself. From the sun which lights and warms us, down to the most insignificant insect that moves upon the earth, there is a scale of beneficial dispositions, formed of innumerable degrees, which demonstrates to us the kindness and goodness of God. In the unfailing care which watches over the interest of each individual link of this vast chain, there is displayed so wonderful a benevolence, such a profusion, yet such a husbanding of benefits, that we cannot contemplate them without loving the Being all Whose works bear goodness as the seal or stamp whereby they may at once be recognised. And how much more apparent does this characteristic become when these works are considered in reference to man, for whose use they have been designed?

How many contrivances there are for man's comfort! How God meets him at every step, as He did our first parents in Paradise, now giving him rest, and now exercising his activity, furnishing him here with food and there with medicine, supplying his wants, and ministering to his pleasures! Truly we live, and move, and have our being in the goodness and loveliness of our God!

2. Reflect how all the motives for the love of God, which are derived from God's relation to ourselves, are summed up by the Apostle in his exhortation to love Him "because He hath first loved us." God, in other words, has a right to our affection under the title of gratitude. Who shall enumerate the various grounds of this title? There is not one instant of our lives in which the love God bears us has not been manifested by the warding off of dangers and the conferring of benefits. Our bodies, our souls, our understanding, our hearts are all gifts which call for love; the many advantages He has bestowed upon us, temporal and spiritual, are all so many claims upon our affection. He showed love for us when

He brought us to the knowledge of His saving faith in preference to millions! How He has shown love for us in the many inspirations we have received from Him, in the graces whereby He has again and again called us to repentance, or roused us to fervour! And returning to more general marks of love, what shall we say of the invaluable benefit and mercy of redemption? To see the Son of God become a poor man for our sakes; to see Him born in a stable in the depth of winter, and suffer penury and pain from the first instant of life, out of love of us, and not love Him in return, is not surely in the nature of man! How barren and cold must our hearts be, if they warm not with an affectionate glow when contemplating the scene of Bethlehem; nay, if they do not, giving life to our imagination, lead us to fancy ourselves present there and feeling the emotions which actual presence would have excited. For not only to show us that He had first loved us did the Son of God go through those painful scenes, but that we might learn how to love Him in return, by embracing Him and pressing Him to

our hearts, as we may imagine we should have done had we been admitted to the happiness of then seeing and knowing Him. And if the beginning of His life gave us lessons of love, what shall we say of its close? If being born for us is a ground of charity, what must dying for us be? If His being born in a stable is a motive for love, what shall we think of His dying on a cross? If the suffering of cold and poverty on the first night of His life be a strong reason for affection, how shall we characterise the crowning of these with torture and anguish on its last day? Oh! woe to his heart who can stand by Calvary, the tree of the Christian Paradise, and not burn with holy love! How much harder than the rocks which split when Jesus died must that heart be if it be not rent with grief and love? Therefore were the chief saints who stood by it such as had best loved: John, the loving and beloved disciple; Magdalen, the penitent, who had loved much; and Mary, the only one who ever loved Him as a mother. And what shall we say of the Sacrament of Love, in which He gives

us daily new evidence of His love for us, and an opportunity of returning Him ours!

3. *Affections.*—O most bountiful God! If Thou wouldst have so many claims upon my affections, why didst Thou not give me more ample means of repaying Thee? What can one heart do in return for so many benefits? How can it possibly satisfy its obligations? What remains for it but to declare its inability to make good their claims, and surrender itself up without reserve to their power? What can it do but acknowledge itself as the servant, the perpetual bondsman of Him Who has so immense a demand upon it, and by an eternal attachment to Him and His law, show at least its willingness to comply with its obligations. And so shall it be, dear Lord. From this moment I give myself into Thy hands, to be moulded by Thee as Thou willest, only let it be for Thy glory. Thou from henceforth shalt be my God, my salvation, my portion, my choice, my sweetness, my delight! Thee from now and for ever I will seek and everywhere find; in Thee I will glory, for Thee I will labour, with Thee I will live, and, if necessary, for

Thee I will die. Thy love shall be the light of mine eyes, the music of my tongue, the regulator of my heart's emotions. Thy unceasing claims shall be answered by unceassing gratitude, Thy incalculable rights shall be met by unlimited sacrifice to Thee of all that I have and am. Oh! consume within me every earthly fire, and inflame my heart with a little of that heavenly flame which burns in the breasts of Thy saints and angels.

Twenty-fourth Day.

On the Dispositions with which we should receive Holy Communion.

1. Reflect that there are many dispositions necessary for our full participation of the benefits to be derived from Holy Communion. The first of these is a holy dread and awe of the sublime sacrament to which we are about to draw nigh, coupled with a deep sense of our unworthiness, as we consider how often we have offended God and incurred His anger, and know not with certainty that our repentance has been such as to secure forgiveness. But even if we cast this heavy solicitude upon the goodness of our God, and trust that in His goodness our sins have been forgiven, who will not tremble at the idea of receiving into his house that dread Lord, in Whose eyes the heavens themselves are not pure, and Who even in His angels can find imperfections? Alas! miserable wretch that

I am, bound by a hundred links of unmortified desires, enslaved to a thousand miserable inclinations, defiled by the daily and hourly failings of my life; who am I that I should presume to approach this consuming fire, this mighty and all pure Lord! How shall I bear the presence of Him Who searches the reins and heart! The woman in the Gospel who wished to touch Jesus, that she might be cured of her long infirmity, came softly behind Him, and then ventured to touch only the hem of His garment; so great was the awe which reverence for Him inspired. How then comes it that I do not shrink in dread from the close embrace of Him Whom no saint, however holy, is worthy to touch? This sense of our utter unworthiness will undoubtedly lead us to more profitable feelings than those of mere confusion and shame. It will produce in us a deep and earnest sorrow for having offended so good a God. We shall not be content with casting ourselves upon the ground before the altar in reverence and holy fear; but we shall also weep bitter tears as we think of our many prevarications and outrages against Him.

"Is it possible," we shall say, "that I can have ever been so blind as to turn my back upon Thee, my sovereign and only good; to declare myself Thine enemy, and to afflict Thee with my sins? What a wretched perversion, what an absolute madness must have come over me, that I should have ceased, for a moment, to love Thee, Who in this very banquet now spread out for me hast given me so many motives to love Thee! Oh, shame upon me for my unfeeling wickedness! Never, never again will I incur its guilt! War, eternal war to sin, and its black ingratitude! No consideration, no temptation shall prevail upon me ever again to admit it into my soul." Thus shall we still further purify our souls, and prepare them for worthily receiving the Lord of the Angels.

2. Reflect how hardened and insensible our hearts must be, if from these consideration and emotions there arises not a holier and nobler feeling; a strong sense of love for that gracious and merciful Saviour, Who is about to unite Himself to us, notwithstanding all our conscious unworthiness.

That He should condescend to reside in the bosom of martyrs, of virgins, may not be matter of such absolute astonishment; but that He should think of admitting such a one as I am to a share in the same sublime favour is truly an excess of self-abasement which has no sufficient name in human speech. And when I consider that He is not to be withheld from this proof of love by those sins which have excited in me such sincere regrets, but is eagerly awaiting my approach, shall I not overpower every other feeling in one universal emotion of love, and transform humility, contrition, and fear itself into the simple and single sentiment of a love stronger than death? I will imagine Him to myself as though I saw Him in His corporal form, beckoning to me, and encouraging me to draw nearer to Him; I will figure to myself those mild inviting eyes, which drew the little children about Him, and attracted the publicans to His presence; those smiling lips that never opened but they spoke of love and mercy; those outstretched arms which seek to embrace me. I will represent Him as urging me to

throw off all fear, and bury every imperfect feeling in His embrace; and I will rush forward to meet Him, and return His greeting with the warmth which characterises His own. How my heart shall beat, as the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world, is held up before my eyes, that once more I may declare my unworthiness, and ask another word of pardon! How my frame shall thrill when I feel the sacred host laid upon my tongue, and enclose within myself the treasure of redemption! How my soul shall silently adore, in sentiments too deep and too sacred for utterance, the glorious prize it now possesses, the ark of eternal covenant, which has here made Itself a sanctuary, the joy of angels Who has here made Himself a dwelling! And then how shall my soul magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoice in God, my Saviour, Who being powerful hath done great things with me, Who hath filled me with good things, and hath accepted me as His servant! How my mouth shall recount His praises, and His greatness throughout the day! How all my actions shall be directed to please Him and

give Him glory, and all my thoughts be as so many breathings from a breast on fire with love! Oh, if such dispositions as these prepare and accompany our communions, how soon shall we be changed into other men, full of the spirit of God, zealous for His law, jealous of His honour, and seekers of His glory. What a lasting fruit we should draw from the altar of our God, nourishing our souls unto eternal life.

3. *Affections.*—Let us then hasten with joy, as often as it is in our power, to this *Agape*, this love-feast of Jesus. It is the tree of life planted in the midst of that small garden of delights which charity yet makes for us in this desert land. Upon it we must feed, if we desire our souls to be endued with the vigour of spiritual life. Its flowers are flowers of holiness, and its fruit is the bread of immortal life. Ever-blessed Jesus, Whom love the most generous brought down from heaven, Whom love the most heroic led to the sacrifice of Calvary, Whom love the most tender places daily upon our altars, be Thou ever dear to me, and the comfort and portion of my soul! Fain would I love Thee

as Thou oughtest be loved. Fain would I correspond with the unmeasurable kindness which Thou displayest towards me. Fain would I make my heart with all its affections a victim, a holocaust of love, asking no more fire to kindle it than those rays of heavenly charity which Thou, the Sun of Righteousness, dartest upon it in this adorable sacrament. Yea, even as the beams of this visible sun could set on fire and convert into a sacred flame the very slime and mire which Thy priest Nehemias placed upon Thine altar; so let the brighter and more powerful rays of Thy love transmute the stagnant waters of my cold affections into a holy fire, which might spread on every side a conflagration of charity. Let me love Thee more and more every time that I receive Thee, till Thou utterly consumest me in the fulness of Thy eternal love.

Twenty-fifth Day.

On Devotion to Our Lady.

1. Reflect how, if the Blessed Mother of God has a loving care of us, we on our part should not be backward in making her a fitting return of affection. If she proves herself on all occasions a Mother to us, the corresponding attitude which we should naturally adopt is that of docile and loving children. In fact, if Jesus upon His Cross said to John, and in his person to us, "Son, behold thy Mother!" it is no less true that He addressed His dear Mother in like words, saying: "Woman, behold thy son." Shall we allow it to be said that these, His last words, are, in respect to us, spoken in vain; that the consolation which in that bitter hour He offered to His heart-broken Mother has proved, so far as we are concerned, but a hollow one. The first and fundamental feeling of a son towards his parents is that of

love, and love must consequently be the groundwork of our devotion towards Mary. Hence we find those saints who have most distinguished themselves by their piety towards her manifesting in her regard all those tender emotions which a child usually displays to the one who gave him birth. Of this kind was the devotion which St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Philip, and many others exhibited. Not only did they call her their Mother, but they also, when addressing her, used all those tender expressions which are employed by a dutiful and affectionate child in respect to a loving parent. A love like this, grounded, as it is, upon a consciousness of the interest which the Blessed Virgin takes in us, will inspire us with a firm confidence that she will never refuse to hear our reasonable petitions, but will rather present them with all a mother's earnestness to her Son. When the sons of Zebedee wished to obtain the right of sitting on the right and left hand of their Master in His kingdom they made this request through their mother. They well knew that a mother's love for her sons would not be restrained by fear or shame

from seeking their interests. And in truth she hesitated not to go before Jesus and urge their petition, unreasonable though it was. If then the requests we make are reasonable, are just, shall we not feel assured that Mary, our Mother, will bear them to the feet of Jesus, and support them by all the influence in her maternal power? If once we come to entertain a devotion towards Mary based upon a sincere and filial love for this Holy Virgin, and a firm confidence in her powerful intercession, what shall we think too great to ask of God? Every petition which we make to Him will be followed by an earnest and devout recommendation of it to the protection and support of Mary. Every morning we shall put ourselves under her patronage; every evening we shall place ourselves under her safeguard; and in all difficulties and dangers we shall invoke her assistance: and thus shall our frailty and the unworthiness of our petitions be compensated by the merits and influence of her who never offended or displeased Him.

2. Reflect how a devotion truly tender and affectionate will not be confined to ordi-

nary formulas of prayer, such as are prescribed for all, but will find many other ways of making itself known, both in words and actions. It is indeed a peculiar beauty of Catholic piety that it engages all the best feelings of the heart on its side. Hence all those simple and innocent methods which the prejudices of sectaries so loudly condemn, and the censorious austerity of even some Catholics will not approve, whereby the inhabitants of Catholic countries demonstrate their love of the Blessed Virgin. If we entertain a tender piety for her, we shall not hesitate which side to choose; and while a holy prudence will guard us from all danger of shocking or scandalising the weak, we shall heartily join in that exuberance of feeling which nourishes the devotion of the simple faithful. We shall feel a delight in those devotions which some despise as fit only for the ignorant and rude; in the frequent use of the rosary, for instance, which the Church so much encourages; in those hymns and exclamations of devout enthusiasm which the multitudes shout forth in times of pilgrimage; in those

appropriations of days and seasons to her special homage. We shall rejoice when one of her festivals comes round, as we should upon the occurrence of a family feast; and we shall be filled with joy at those exhibitions of gladness which the Church then sets before us. Not only shall we take part in the common ardour, but our hearts will be excited thereby to a more fervent love of her in whose honour so much is done. We shall feel that it is for one that belongs to us that such love is entertained; we shall in our hearts congratulate her, and sincerely desire that such devotion may become still more general. But this participation in all that concerns devotion to Mary will have more important results if it lift up our desires to heaven, where she is glorified, not by sinful men, but by saints and angels; where she is not adorned by the hands of those who can only lavish their gifts upon her images, but crowned by her Divine Son with a diadem of glory second only to His own. If we truly love her we shall long for the time when we shall be partakers of her joy, and reap in her society the fruits of our

earnest devotion to her upon earth. A tender piety like this will lead us to honour all her festivals by greater devotion and fervour in our prayers, and by worthily approaching the altar of her Son. Thus will it advance our sanctification. Moreover, it will induce us to cherish those virtues which she especially loves, such as a profound humility, and still more an undefiled purity of body and soul, and a horror of every sin, and a careful avoiding of every danger that could lead to it.

3. *Affections.*—Oh! my dear Mother, whom thy Divine Son gave me amidst the agonies of death, how shall I learn the love I owe thee save from the lessons of that hour? John loved thee so that from that hour he took thee to himself. He would no more be sundered from thee whom he had thus received; he would no more lose sight of the treasure confided to his guardianship. If then I received thee at the same time and by the same words, shall I not be equally jealous of thy love, equally careful ever to keep thee at my side by making for thee a pleasing dwelling in the affections of my

heart? I will address thee each day as if really present to my eyes; I will nourish towards thee a filial reverence and a filial love which shall be expressed to thee in fervent and confident supplications. But oh! how did Jesus love thee in that hour, how did He remember all that thou hadst done and suffered for Him throughout His blessed life, and all that thou wert suffering for Him then! How His heart sympathised with thy sorrow! And the fruit of this was His making me thy child! Oh! let me never forget in how much agony this title was given me! Let me ever study to imitate Him in dutifulness towards thee, and do thou give me a place near to Him in thy heart!

Twenty-sixth Day.

On Devotion to our Patron Saints.

1. Reflect how wise it has been of the Church of God to institute the practice of giving to each of her children at the baptismal font the name of one of God's saints. She thus establishes a strong link of connection between the Church in heaven and that on earth. In the same manner as noble families have particular appellations, which they perpetuate by giving them to their children, so do we, by assuming the names of those who are already reigning in heaven, show that we are of their spiritual lineage, that we claim a portion in the graces and virtues which they possessed before us, and that we aspire to the same eternal inheritance in the house of our common Father. We are reminded that we belong to a race of saints, in whose company we ought one day to be, and whose names we are not

even now unworthy to bear. But when names of ancestors are perpetuated in a family, it is always because the first who bore it distinguished himself in such sort as to reflect glory upon all his line, whose ambition it must be to reproduce his fame. Nay, men give to their children the names of illustrious personages, whose excellencies they wish them to copy, even though they be in no way related to them. If then the Church of God has wished each of us to bear the name of some saint, it is that we should take him as our model and exemplar. As a soldier who bears the name of some celebrated general would wish to resemble him in the qualities which made him famous, so should each of us study particularly to copy those virtues which made our patron saints dear to God and glorious in the Church, and strive to be mortified, and meek, and poor in spirit, and zealous, even as they were. This is the best, the truest way of honouring the saints whose names were given to us at our baptism. They must particularly love those virtues that won them their high places in heaven, and assist us

most willingly in our desires to attain and practise them. And if we thus show them our love and respect, what an unbounded confidence may we not place in their patronage. We have in them members of the heavenly court, who acknowledge a more individual and closer tie with us than the general assembly of the Blessed. They saw us reverently put under their care and protection as we rose from the waters of regeneration. We were then pure and innocent, and they could not help loving us and feeling a sincere interest in our behalf. Among the first prayers which we learnt to lisp was the invocation of their names. And if we have turned our backs upon God, still our patron saints have ever continued to consider us as confided to their solicitude, and have never failed to intercede for us. Let us then be ever grateful for so much kindness; let us have daily recourse to these our friends, and by daily recommending ourselves to their suffrages and protection, increase their influential intercession for us at the throne of God.

2. Reflect how, besides those patrons to

whom we have been commended by others, before we ourselves were able to judge of the utility of such a patronage, we have other patrons whom we ourselves have chosen from a deliberate sense of the necessity in which we were of such assistance. Not to speak of the ever-blessed Mother of God, the first and paramount protectress and advocate of all and each of us, who has not sought out some of the saints whose virtues he most coveted, or whose influence in heaven he considered especially powerful, and placed himself under their care, and at least from time to time had recourse to their intercession. One will have chosen the spouse of Mary, another the Baptist, or the Prince of the Apostles, or St. Aloysius, or St. Charles Borromeo. If towards those patrons whom we have had appointed for us by others we ought to entertain sentiments of respect, love, and confidence, how much more should we entertain them for such as have been the objects of our own choice? Would it not be an insult to them to turn our backs upon them, after having once besought them to befriend us with their

Heavenly Master and assist us in the many difficulties that surround us? Were we to make ourselves the clients of a powerful man upon earth, and, after he had interested himself warmly and successfully in our favour, gave him no tokens of our gratitude or love, would he not justly upbraid us with such conduct, and indignantly resent it? If then we have chosen for ourselves celestial patrons, who ever see the face of our Father Who is in heaven, let us not provoke them to indignation against us by our unthankful neglect; but rather let us cultivate their kind offices, by frequent accomplishment of our duties towards them. Let us each morning and evening recommend ourselves waking or sleeping to their guardianship; let us in all difficulties and trials have recourse to their prayers: let us often thank them for their merciful interposition between God and us. But our devotion towards these our blessed patrons must be not merely the result of duty or obligation, but the expression of a sincere affection. For we should meditate upon the lives and virtues of these our heavenly protectors, till a

thorough understanding of their characters is begotten in our souls, and we acquire an intimate, personal knowledge of them. We must pray to them with such complete confidence and loving familiarity that we shall seem rather to be addressing a dear friend than praying to one who is exalted immensely above us. They must become as brethren to us, who, as we know, will refuse us nothing, but will exert themselves to the utmost in our behalf. And as our meditation will sometimes appear to bring them down to us, as though we saw them by our side ; so shall it at other times raise us up to them in heaven, and make that blessed place appear the more beautiful from our seeing there those whom we love, awaiting us, and inviting us to come and share their bliss. Thus shall our devotion to our dear patron saints be an incentive, as their intercession will be a means to help us towards the joys of our eternal reward.

3. *Affections.* — Merciful God, inexhaustible in the resources of Thy loving kindness, I thank Thee from my heart for this among Thy many favours, that, instead

of leaving me alone to cope with the many dangers that surround me, Thou hast placed me under the safeguard of Thy blessed saints, on whose merits and prayers Thou canst look with complacency, and for whose sake Thou wilt do for Thine unworthy servant more than otherwise he would dare to hope. Regard then their love for Thee, all that they have done and suffered for Thy sake, rather than the evil of my life and the imperfection of my conduct: receive their supplications when my prayers are not fit to appear in Thy presence. And ye blessed saints whose names were called upon me when first I was received into the bosom of the Church, a child of grace and heir of heaven; and ye whom afterwards I myself asked to take me under your special patronage, lift up your voices with mine in earnest supplication to our common Lord, that He will be pleased to add a new glory to your immortal crowns, by the salvation of me, your humble votary. Take me by the hand, and place me in your midst; support my failing steps, guide my erring ways, and bring me in triumph to your happy society. Once more I ratify my

choice of you as my special patrons, guardians, and friends; once more I commit myself to your friendly care, and entreat you in all earnestness to accept me as your client, and to defend and protect me.

Twenty-seventh Day.

On Fervour in the Service of God.

1. Reflect how justly God exacts from us fervour in His service. By fervour is meant that earnestness and warmth wherewith we pursue any object that we have much at heart. We are fervent in any pursuit when its thought is uppermost in our minds, when we let nothing take its place at those times when it may fairly claim our attention, and when our application to it is distinguished by intensity and perseverance. The ambitious man is a fervent politician, the avaricious man is fervent in the pursuit of wealth, and the ardent philosopher in the pursuit of learning. Now has not God a full right to at least as much fervour in His service? Could He, without surrendering a necessary claim, content Himself with such cold attention to our duty as would not be considered becoming in the most paltry earthly pursuit? Compare the claims which God has to our

undivided service with those of any other person or object. Compare the importance to ourselves of satisfying the obligation imposed in each case with the reward which awaits us in one case and then the other. See if it be not degrading to God's service to put it into comparison with any other task or duty. When we see a man cold and languid in his efforts to attain an object, we say he does not deserve to get it. If a beggar asks for an alms with a careless, absent air, we conclude that he is in no great distress, and but little worthy of our compassion. And yet we are foolish enough to hope that we shall gain heaven, that is to say infinite felicity, by the cold and spiritless practice of our religion. We imagine that we shall draw down on ourselves divine blessings and heavenly graces that are beyond all price, by prayers void of earnestness and feeling, and void still more of love! Is not this unreasonable in the highest degree? If then we truly consider God worth serving, and heaven worth attaining, we must consider it worth while to make our efforts earnest and fervent. But it will be chiefly

in those practices of religion that our fervour will display itself. In prayer we shall be warmed up into that earnest devotion which really deserves the name of devotion. In our meditation we shall be animated by a fervour of a deeper and more reflective character, whereby the truths of God may burn their impressions into our hearts. When we approach the Blessed Eucharist, love will still more fully enkindle within our breasts its hallowed flame, making a holocaust of our affections to the ineffable goodness of our dear Redeemer. We shall endeavour to communicate to others the spiritual fire which glows within ourselves. When we converse with our friends on the things of God we shall make it evident to them that the holy Law of God is the one great reality for us, and that we know neither duty nor pleasure but to carry out its behests. We shall speak as those that are strangers and pilgrims, that have not here a lasting city, but look forward to one that is to come. In whatsoever we shall say or do, we shall be animated by no other desire than that of pleasing God, and ordering our whole

lives according to His good pleasure and command.

2. Reflect how difficult, not to say impossible, it is for us to persevere in a steady state of fervour and diligence, and therefore how necessary it is for us to keep a constant watch over ourselves, to prevent any falling away from the high standard of religious perfection which we should all propose to ourselves. We must be careful, however, to distinguish between decline in sensible devotion and decline in true fervour. By mistaking the former for the latter we may easily be discouraged without sufficient ground. We should understand therefore that the sensible pleasure and emotion which we may occasionally feel in prayer is a gift of God which He may at will withdraw from us. Fervour, on the contrary, is always within our power. The saints have been most fervent, in spite of the greatest spiritual dryness and desolation, and the same should be true of ourselves. Moreover, there is danger of our being misled by a mere morbid feeling into self-deceit, imagining ourselves to be very

devout, while in reality we are only soft and tender. Temptation is here the test; if we still yield to anger, to pride, or to evil thoughts, it is not a genuine fervour that has possessed our hearts. But in the second place, even the truest fervour will decline, and that stock which we store up on any particular occasion, such as during a retreat, will gradually be expended till we find ourselves as lukewarm as before. On this account it behoves us carefully to observe the first symptoms of a decline in piety, such as hastening over or curtailing our religious duties, thinking less frequently of God during the day, neglecting to offer up our actions to Him, or to call ourselves to account for them by examination of our consciences, or inattention to those more special resolutions which we have made for our guidance. And no sooner do we observe any of these than we should lose no time in turning our particular attention to its correction. At the same time, we shall use any ingenious means that we may think effectual for increasing our fervour. For instance, we shall propose to ourselves the task of spending the en-

suing week with more than usual exactness and devotion, for which we shall feel more courage than if we look forward to a longer period : and perhaps we shall devote that week to some special object of devotion, as the worship of the Blessed Eucharist, or praying for the conversion of our country ; or we shall place it in a special manner under the protection of our Blessed Lady or of some patron saint. And then, having retrieved what we had lost, we start anew on a fresh course of perfection. We must ever consider ourselves as sickly and weak in our spiritual constitution. And as sickly persons have need of frequent medicine to keep them free from smaller ailments, and to brace them up and preserve them in tolerable health, so must we from time to time use such opportune remedies of our lesser ills as will keep us from relapsing into more serious maladies.

3. *Affections and Resolutions.*—It is too true, O my God, that in spite of my earnest desires I keep up but poorly to what I have promised Thee. With difficulty I persevere in the bare discharge of necessary duties, and

even these seem irksome and fatiguing. If I endeavour to go beyond them, I too soon fall away, and return to my former tepidity. But now I desire, by Thy grace, to amend my past lukewarmness, and give Thee proof of my earnest desire to love and serve Thee. I have devoted myself to Thee, and what is the first object in that devotion which Thou requirest of me but my heart and affections? Take them then, dear Lord, and fix and rivet them so completely to Thee that no coolness may ever be able to estrange them from Thee, and no distraction of earthly objects rob Thee of their smallest share. Rather let me partake of that grace Thou hast granted to Thy servants of ever increasing their fervour and love.

Twenty-eighth Day.

On Constancy and Perseverance in Virtue.

1. Reflect how serious a drawback to our spiritual advancement is the fickleness and inconstancy of all our efforts, and the facility with which we fall away from all that we purpose and promise to God. We have often made excellent beginnings; we have started on the race of a new life with the best spirit, and flattered ourselves that now at least we were in earnest, and firmly determined to continue therein. For a time we persevered —our good resolves were faithfully observed; the way of virtue began to be smooth and pleasant, and we imagined our perseverance to be secured. By degrees, however, we began to perceive a slight diminution in our fervour; some of the more galling or troublesome duties we had imposed upon ourselves were occasionally neglected. With each omission a portion of our resolution, however small,

evaporated; by little and little more important resolutions came to be forgotten, discouragement crept over us, we lost our relish for devotion, and after a few weeks or months we found ourselves back at the very point from which we had aroused ourselves with so much fervour! Such is the history often repeated in the lives of the best of us. But besides this unsteadiness in treading the paths of fervour on which we had entered, how many proofs do we give from day to day of inconstancy in the discharge of ordinary duties! If we begin the day well, what security do we feel that we shall equally well end it? If we open our prayer with attention and devotion, what certainty have we of closing it with the same dispositions? If we undertake any work of more arduous virtue, what probability is there that we shall bring it to a satisfactory conclusion? In short, hardly a single duty do we perform which is not spoilt by our fickleness and inconstancy. And how shall we remedy this failing? First, by endeavouring to live each day as though it were to be our last. Let us not think that we have years, or months, or weeks of trial

before us, but let us think only of the present day, and engage all our powers to spend it well. Thus we shall avoid the discouragement which springs so often from the thought that a long period of struggle and pain must be passed through, with success at the end uncertain. In the second place, let us prescribe to ourselves no devotions or good works that are beyond our strength. Let us content ourselves with doing little, provided that it be done regularly, punctually, and diligently. Thirdly, let us from time to time, at periods of retreat and retirement, on all the great festivals of our Lord and His Blessed Mother, at the close of the year, on our birthdays, and on many other occasions renew our fervour, and repeat once more our good resolutions, and supply whatever loss may have taken place in our stock of diligence and fervour. Thus shall our inconstancy hurt us the less; thus shall we come to be steady and persevering.

2. Reflect how perseverance has a still higher meaning, signifying that steadfast attachment to virtue, and that permanent obedience to God's Law which alone secures

salvation. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." "He that perseveres till the end shall be saved." Such is the compact into which God hath entered with us, such the only condition on which He will bestow upon us His rewards above all price. If duly considered, it is an awful compact, sufficient to form an antidote against any serious departure from virtue. For if the moment after incurring such a guilt, an accident were to cut short the thread of our existence, all the good works, the faith, the charity, the devotion of a long life would go for nothing, and we should be irretrievably lost to all eternity! Is not this a dreadful thought? Over the duration of our lives we have no control; we have no covenant with death, no security for a day or an hour. But at the same time God hath placed in our own hands the other condition of perseverance, the remaining ever faithful to him, the being ever watchful from the first to the last watch of the night, so that at whatever hour our Lord cometh He may find us prepared. We cannot afford to sin even once, no not even for a moment,

since on that moment may depend our eternity. While therefore we indulge in no foolish anticipations of the future, and forbear to terrify ourselves with its dangers, let every present moment be so spent as that our perseverance to the end may be ensured. Thus shall we be as men that have set their hands to the plough at the beginning of the furrow, and relax not till they have reached its farther end. They do not amuse themselves with looking back to see how much they have done; they only look forward to see that they are going straight towards the end, and all their attention and strength are employed in doing well that portion over which they are actually passing. Let our final perseverance be the result of constant actual steadiness; let our safe arrival at the end of our prescribed task be the fruit of daily and hourly constancy, and we shall run no risks, but always be prepared for the last most important summons.

3. *Affections.*—All-wise and all-powerful God, Who alone knowest the day and the hour, which are concealed from the very angels that see Thy face, allow not death to

take me unawares, but grant that it may find me watching. Fix my heart, steady my thoughts, give stability to my resolutions and constancy to my efforts, that so each day may be the epitome of what my life should be, a course of undeviating virtue, and a perfect observance of Thy commandments. Let me close the day in peace and security, so that if Thou shouldst call me hence during the night, I may be found worthy to enter into Thy rest.

Twenty-ninth Day.

On Seeing the Humanity of Jesus in Heaven.

1. Reflect, if it will be a glorious thing to witness and have a part in the joy of the saints, what a delight it will be to see and approach the Saviour of our souls, Jesus Christ our Lord, in His own kingdom. Who has heard of Him and not wished to see Him? Who has meditated upon His blessed life and not desired that it had been in his power to assist at many of His glorious actions? Who would not have willingly taken part in His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and borne a palm in that procession? Who would not have gladly joined His voice in the hosannas which then rent the air? Who would not have rejoiced to see Him rise triumphant from the grave, or ascend into heaven with so much majesty and glory from Mount Olivet? Oh! how much more delightful it will be to

a loving heart to see the splendour that surrounds Him as He is in heaven, to behold Him an object of adoration to the legions of bright angels and the millions of souls He has redeemed; to find ourselves partakers of His heavenly triumphs, and to join our voices in the songs and psalms of triumph which will never cease or relax. And who is there that would not earnestly desire to see that body which suffered for his redemption, not indeed as abused and disfigured by its tormentors, but as compensated for all its indignities and pains by corresponding honours? We shall see it then with those five seals of love, those five blessed wounds which even the all-healing air of Paradise will not close; for they remain as roses of charity to perfume that atmosphere of love. Should we not consider ourselves most happy could we but touch the hem of Jesus' garment, like that infirm woman in the Gospel? Are we not almost disposed to envy the incredulity of Thomas, or to think it was but poorly punished by procuring him the comfort of touching with his hand the wounded side of his Redeemer? But in heaven we shall be

allowed not merely to see Jesus, or to touch His garments with fear and trembling, or His Body with misdoubting shame, but in the full satiety of knowledge, and in the perfect sentiment of charity, to embrace His Sacred Humanity, as being entirely our possession and our joy. But that which a penitent lover of Jesus most covets is what Magdalen was allowed to enjoy, to kneel at His feet and wash them with tears, and kiss them with fervent affection. In heaven, where there will be no repentance, because there can be no sorrow, we may promise ourselves this satisfaction of our desires, to kneel at His sacred feet, and pour forth there our homage ; and if we cannot express regret, inasmuch as all our transgressions have been forgotten, to make our love as reverential and as much akin to sorrowful repentance as that happy place will admit. Is it possible that I shall one day enjoy all this ? Is it credible that a time will come, and that not very distant, when I shall stand as completely in the presence of my Saviour, and shall see Him face to face as clearly as His chosen Apostles? That I shall

enjoy His company, and be able to contemplate Him and admire Him? And if heaven had in itself no joy, no happiness but this, would it not be inducement enough to toil and suffer an entire life long for its attainment?

2. Reflect what a happiness it will be not merely to see and contemplate Jesus in His humanity, but likewise to converse with Him and hear His voice. When He was on the holy Mount of Thabor there appeared to His chosen Apostles "Moses and Elias, discoursing with Him concerning His decease, which He should accomplish in Jerusalem." And now that the pain is over, what subject can we imagine more delightful for discourse between Jesus and His chosen friends, than the decease which He has accomplished? With what gratitude and most tender affection may we not imagine them recalling the principal scenes of His passion to His remembrance, dwelling with peculiar delight on those which most strongly evinced His love for man! And with what sweetness may we not suppose Him to expatiate upon the motives

which led to this, His inexpressible charity! Only from His blessed mouth will the whole extent of His mercies be learnt. Yet not with such intercourse as this will our souls be satisfied. We shall needs desire individually to hear and speak to Jesus, and hear His voice directly addressing us. And thus indeed it shall be. For we may with right conceive that the approving words in which our reward will be decreed will come from Him Whose disciples, servants, and brethren we are. We may imagine ourselves, therefore, led into His presence by our guardian angel, by those saints whose patronage we have principally invoked, and by our common Mother, Mary, and presented to Him as one who during life had believed and hoped in Him, and loved Him, as one who had sought His honour and promoted His glory, and kept His commandments. And He, in reply, shall address us most graciously and sweetly, saying: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of our Lord." Oh! how little will all that we have done appear to us in comparison with what we might and ought to have performed!

How shall we desire that these words had been pronounced upon us for some truly great actions done in His service: yea, martyrdom itself and the outpouring of our blood will not appear too much to have been undergone to deserve such an approbation as this.

3. *Affections.*—"In my flesh I shall see my God, Whom I myself shall see and my eyes shall behold." I shall then one day have the happiness of thanking Thee, my Saviour, in Thy presence, for all the immensity of Thy kindness, and all the intensity of Thy affection. Oh! when will that day come? When shall the veil be drawn away, the veil of this my corrupt flesh, which hides Thee from mine eyes? When will this contemplation of reflected images cease, and the reality of Thy majesty and beauty be manifested to me? Break out from the cloud that envelops Thee, O Sun of righteousness; disperse its chill and gloom, and stand revealed to my ravished soul in Thy proper charms. But purge my sight, that it may be able then to look on Thee, for none shall see Thee but the pure of heart. Teach me

to love Thee in such a manner here as may make me worthy of so blessed a sight as that of Thy humanity. Often teach me now to go in spirit to Thy feet, and there express those feelings which Thou shalt approve in that joyful day when I shall truly place myself before them.

Thirtieth Day.

On the Fulness of Heaven's Joys.

1. Reflect upon that promise which Jesus made to His apostles, grieving at the thought that soon He would leave them, "that their joy should be full." This promise, indeed, was in some sense fulfilled in the satisfaction which the apostles derived from the triumphant return of their Lord and Master from the grave. Yet its complete accomplishment was found only in heaven, where He established His apostles in the place He had prepared for them. In heaven above is to be found the fulness of joy. To understand this, we will not degrade that happy place by comparison with the joys of earth. What would it be but an insult to God's kingdom, to say that its honours are more secure than those which depend on the fickle breath of mortal man? or its riches more solid than the dust and

dross of this earth? or its inward satisfaction better grounded than theirs whose minds pass from joy to sorrow like a field in spring, over which clouds come and go, casting shades or permitting the sun to shine! Let us then, to show the true fulness of heaven's joys, select as sole term of comparison the only approach to real happiness which earth possesses, the satisfaction and happiness of the virtuous man, conscious of God's favour and love. Let us therefore imagine such a man, easy in conscience, tranquil in mind, his thoughts ever engaged with his duties, his worldly concerns settled on so firm a basis as to give no room for anxiety, or his heart so resigned as not to feel it. He is indeed truly happy if this epithet can be applied to any one upon earth. And what is it that makes him so? It is the prospect of one day being in God's heaven, enjoying Him face to face! One stray beam of the glories of that blessed place, borne to him on the wings of hope, gives the greatest happiness which can be enjoyed in this world. What then must be the standing in the full blaze of this sun of inexpressible

brightness. The just man here is happy in the testimony of his conscience; the Spirit testifying to his spirit that God loves him, and that he loves God in return. What proportion can there be between this happiness and assurance, which are always subject to some uncertainty and fear, and that conferred by hearing from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Himself, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"? The light then which cheers the heart and the path of the just man here below, rendering the one most serene and the other most pleasant, is but a reflected light, in its nature imperfect, and bearing no comparison with that enjoyed by such as stand before the face of the Lamb, Who is the lamp of that blessed Jerusalem. And happy as the virtuous Christian may be in himself, he necessarily must partake in others' misery. He cannot exclude from his eyes the wretched spectacle of suffering, bodily, mental, and spiritual, which surrounds him. He never can shut out from his ears the words of sin and outrage against God which resound on every side. He cannot defend

his own senses or thoughts against presumptuous or revolting images. He never can forget that he inhabits a vale of tears. But in heaven, this alloy of golden happiness, this thorn amidst our sweetest flowers, this river of gall flowing through the land of milk and honey will be taken away, and no sight, no thought may come, which can, however slightly, disturb or ruffle the ocean of felicity on which we shall repose. Nay, the blessedness of thousands and of millions will be blended into one sum of happiness, not to be divided among them, but to be individually enjoyed in its immensity by each. For each shall partake of the happiness of all, and have his own joy multiplied as many times as he has companions in this inexpressible fulness of joy.

2. Reflect how our Blessed Saviour Himself seems to offer us one of the principal characteristics of fulness of joy, when He says to His Apostles, "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." The security of happiness is what can only be enjoyed in heaven. The virtuous man is full of generous resolution

rather to die than offend or fall away from God. He trusts too, with full confidence, in the stability of God's promises never to abandon Him. But he knows his own weakness; he feels himself surrounded and filled with temptation; he has read and heard of the frightful falls of others from a sublimer height of sanctity than his own, the sudden extinguishing of bright lights. He fears the deceits of his own heart, the subtle poison of pride which creeps in and circulates through means of apparently the best affections; and the firmer he seems to himself to stand, the more he trembles and fears lest he may fall. Till his dying moment has crowned the precious gift of final perseverance he cannot be sure of his eternal happiness. But when that moment is past, and his soul has reached the kingdom of God, then indeed he knows and feels that his joys no man can take from him. The duration of his blessedness is bound up in the eternity of God: the one can no more fail than the other. The security of his felicity is based upon the eternal rock of the Almighty's stability: nothing can shake

the one more than the other. No shadow of change, no danger of inconstancy, no apprehension of satiety can disturb the full flow of happiness over his soul. Did those blessed souls, in the midst of their joys, foresee but the remotest possibility that ages of enjoyment would in the end produce not a surfeit indeed, but the smallest diminution in the zest and exquisite happiness of the first moment of fruition, there would be some flaw, however slight, in the fulness of their joy. Yet even this, the smallest imaginable drawback to their happiness does not exist, and they dash and plunge themselves into the fathomless ocean of bliss, with the certainty that when they have dived into it for eternity, they will be no nearer to exhausting its sweet and pleasant waters. But if, as to duration and security, fulness of joy can be only attained in the court of God's house, what shall we say of that fulness of joy which consists in the proportion and equality between the capacity for enjoyment and the object that is to fill it. Here below the soul craves for adequate happiness, and expands and stretches itself forth to obtain it. And

its largest attainment is when some gleam of God's beauty falls, however faintly and transiently upon it. What then must its fulness be when God, in the whole magnificence of His unveiled nature, throws Himself into it, as the sole object of its meditation, the sole object of its love, as its life, its very being! How will this heart of ours contain, without either bursting or overflowing with far more joy than it can contain, this inpouring of God into all its affections and powers! How will the soul expand itself in the attempt to encircle and embrace this vast, dimensionless abyss of wonder and of joy which exhausts its whole capacity? Surely the soul would perish from very strain, did not that power which confers the object of bliss support, sustain, and enlarge its faculties, till by a miracle of love there is some proportion between that vision which makes the blessedness of God and the capacity of the soul for apprehension and enjoyment.

3. *Affections.*—"Oh, land of true, of stable, and of immeasurable joys! When wilt thou come to me, or rather when shall I come to thee?" Here, in the body of this

death, we experience at best imperfect happiness, and that only in those few moments when we try to think of thee. And if there be here no fulness of joy, even for those who in good and perfect heart love God, and aspire after thee, what must it be with us, fickle, sinful, inconstant as we are, and struggling with a thousand evils? O God! Who hast created me for Thyself, and wilt allow me no true joy till I attain to Thee, give restlessness to the wings of my spirit and affections, that like those of the blessed seraphs who stand by Thy throne, they may repose neither day nor night, but fly forwards and upwards towards Thy blessed face. Scatter on my parched soul some drops from the torrent of Thy eternal bliss, till I come to drink it with full mouth for endless ages.

Thirty-first Day.

On the Eternity of Heaven's Joys.

1. Reflect how the great drawback to all the joys which earth can offer is their transitory and fading nature. Not one of the charms which Nature presents is of lasting character. The spring passes quickly by, and takes along with it its freshness and verdure. The flowers of the field are emblematical of fading beauty; the shrubs and trees in their autumnal change present an image of passing, unstable charms. Youth is a brief season, that soon gives way to wearisome old age; beauty and strength are but as a garment that is soon worn out. Novelty can last but for a very short time, and with it departs the zest of almost every pleasure. And what are the artificial enjoyments which man creates? The feast is soon over; the public pageant soon passes by; the fairest spectacle must some time be closed;

the season of gladness glides away more rapidly than the time of sorrow and affliction ; life itself, with all its pleasures and joys, is very soon over. One of the most marked differences between earthly and heavenly happiness is that the latter will last for ever, while the former ends in a day. How shall we measure the eternity of heaven's happiness? Shall we compare it with time? Shall we say that year shall roll on after year and age succeed to age, yet no term be put to the happiness of the blessed? But what idea will this give us beyond that of an immense, immeasurable, and to us unimaginable duration? This idea of succession is indeed at variance with the true character of eternity. Still, it is only in this way that we can conceive it. The time therefore, so to speak, which we shall enjoy in heaven will be as an interminable series, ever increasing, ever lengthening, without our ever reaching any point that can be called a period, a measure of proportion between the past and the future. When we have lived here below forty years we know, as a matter of course, that the ten years added to our age since we

were thirty have been taken away from what remains to us of life; and as we advance in years we are morally sure that the portion which is spent is greater than that which has to come. Not so in heaven. This distinction of past and future, of more or less, will not be known; there will be no measures; eternity is one indivisible thing, a mode of existence always in the present, having no reference to past or future. God's eternity is expressed by the words "I am"; and though the life in heaven of beings created in time can bear no comparison with His which had no beginning, yet will they receive from Him some share of His eternity, and like Him, they and their joys shall have no end. When a period like to ten thousand years or ages have elapsed we shall be no farther from the beginning and no nearer the end of our joy than we were when we crossed the threshold of heaven.

2. Reflect how this eternity is to be spent. It is an eternity of bliss. It is not an existence chequered by good and evil, or wherein our happiness is distinct from mere being, but it is a state of perfect, consummate,

essential good, where the very fact of having life secures invariable, undiminishable enjoyment of the greatest possible happiness. During all this time we shall be blessed by the sight of God, and immersed in a delight as infinite in intensity as interminable in duration; in an ocean of pure, celestial joy, without a bottom and without a shore. Oh, what a thought! To be undistracted by the smallest care, undisturbed by the slightest anxiety; to have no thought of the morrow, no apprehension of future distress, of sorrow, illness, or pain, but to sum up life in a present moment of exquisite happiness, a moment which shall never pass away! For in the idea of this blessed eternity is comprised an unlimited security of the bliss enjoyed. It is an endless rapture before the face of God, as immutable as He from Whom is its source. As the mirror never ceases to reflect the image that remains before it, so shall the glorified soul, contemplating itself in God, Who is all joy and happiness, never for one instant fail to see itself there, amidst those attributes and perfections which form His and its glory and bliss. The contemplation

of the Divine Essence is the manna, the fruit of life, that feeds the soul from eternity unto eternity without cloying and without failing, filling it with ever new and unsurpassing sweetness. Thus we need not fear that in such an occupation, lasting for endless ages, either our powers or their object will be exhausted; or that the contemplation of God will cease to supply us with matter for enjoyment, or that our souls will lose the relish for it by such long and unceasing application. No; the light of God will unfailingly supply us with new powers, while the infinity of His perfections will never allow those powers to want an object on which to be exercised. But, at the same time, eternal will be all the accessory joys of heaven. Eternal will be that happy society with the blessed spirits, ever beautiful and lovely, and that intercourse of love and friendship which, unclouded by a suspicion, a jealousy, or the discovery of a fault, will be as cordial, as complete, throughout eternity, as it was at the first moment that we were introduced into their glorious company. Eternal will be our communion with the Church triumphant of God's saints,

the interchange of love with apostles and martyrs; eternal the affection and regard of those who have been dear to us on earth, without diminution or distraction. Eternal will be our filial familiarity with Mary, whom we have loved as a Mother here below, and whom we shall admire and love infinitely more when we shall see her in her glory as Queen of Heaven. Eternal too will be the song of jubilee and praise wherein we shall mingle our voices with the Seraphim; eternal the boundless gratitude which we shall feel and express towards our Sovereign Benefactor; eternal our love and tender fraternal attachment to Jesus, the Redeemer, Whose wounds were our salvation, and Whose glorious countenance gives joy to the angels. Ah! how unequal are our understandings to the joys of heaven! How feebly do they grasp the infinite idea of such endless happiness!

3. *Affections.*—O God, what is time to me, who have in prospect such a hope as this! What are years of reputation, of honours, of wealth or influence, to a soul that hath in store eternal joys? The hours of

this probationary state, loaded though they be with sorrow, swiftly pass away; soon are they over, and then we find ourselves in the boundless expanse of undisturbed repose! Welcome that blessed age, that day without a night, whose sun sets not, nor wanes, nor declines! Welcome that kingdom of peace and joy, whose crown is never dimmed, and whose vestments of glory the moth and time can never consume! Welcome that land overflowing with milk and honey, where winter destroys not the beauties of spring, and where ages lessen not the first blossoms of its joy! What have I to do with the perishable who am myself immortal? What has my soul in common with that which dieth, seeing that my soul dieth not? In Thee alone, Eternal God, can I find repose; to Thee alone will my heart fly for refuge. Thy courts alone will I sigh after and languishing desire. Happy they who have already secured this blessed lot! happy we if with Thy grace we spurn all temporal things in order to acquire it.

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